

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

DHARMA WORLD

NOV./DEC. 2005 Vol. 32



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DHARMA WORLD

For Living Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue

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Cover photo: On the evening of August 6, the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, children float lanterns in the Motoyasu River. The river runs beside the Atomic Bomb Dome (*at right*), which barely survived the bombing near the hypocenter. Every year, as part of anniversary events, citizens and families of the deceased float lighted lanterns in the river, praying for the repose of the souls of the atomic-bomb victims.

DHARMA WORLD presents Buddhism as a practical living religion and promotes interreligious dialogue for world peace. It espouses views that emphasize the dignity of life, seeks to rediscover our inner nature and bring our lives more in accord with it, and investigates causes of human suffering. It tries to show how religious principles help solve problems in daily life and how the least application of such principles has wholesome effects on the world around us. It seeks to demonstrate truths that are fundamental to all religions, truths on which all people can act.

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Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun

Kyoto National Museum

Returning to the Path of “One Truth”

by Yoshiaki Sanada

There is one truth; we should not fight over how it is cut.” Rev. Shundo Aoyama, chief priest of Muryoji and of the Aichi Senmon Niso-do, a training temple for female Soto Zen priests, has strongly expressed this as the spirit of interreligious dialogue. She has gone on to say: “For example, let us take a round can of tea and stand it up. If we slice it horizontally, the cut will be round; if vertically, rectangular; and if diagonally, elliptical. If we emphasize the difference in the cuts, then we will have disputes. But if, instead, we concentrate on the fact that the different cuts all share the same truth, in that they are all parts of the can of tea, then we will find a key to help us effect discussions among religions in conflict.”

Whatever religion we look at, there is none that does not advocate the salvation of self and others, the happiness of self and others, and peace—not only for self alone, but also for society. The truth of these aspirations, like traditional folk attire, was given different types of concrete expression depending upon where the spiritual leader lived, to which

people that leader belonged, and the natural, social, and cultural environment in which the leader lived. But, going beyond the outer differences, if each religion looks deeply within the differences and penetrates into the secret that was hidden there, it will be revealed of its own that the truth is one. For that to be possible, humility is required so that we can see the different “cuts” as valuable indicators that enable us to look into the reality of our own religions, respect the differences among religions, and learn from one another.

In an earlier issue of this magazine, I discussed the word “fanaticism.” The term derives from the Latin *fanum*, or temple, which in one sense is interesting. That is, *fanum* gave rise to the adjective *fanaticus*, which includes the connotations of “frenzied,” “enraged,” and “insane.” This indicates the very close relationship between the concepts of “temple” and “madness.”

Indeed, when religions shut themselves in the deep recesses of their temples with narrow-mindedness or bigotry, this gives rise to self-righteousness and arrogance, and a feeling that others should be rejected; and sometimes a madness erupts that condones violence and even causing death. However, when religion transcends the bounds of the temple and encounters other religions and engages in dialogue with the power of reason granted by the deities, then through that dialogue, they can come to know the spirits of others, and even though they start climbing the mountain on a different path, because they have the common goal of reaching the summit of salvation, happiness, and peace, surely, through repeating that experience over and over, they will become aware that they are all walking toward the same goal.

Here, I have perhaps too directly imputed that religion is responsible for madness. But it is a fact that we have the phrase “religious war.” Observing the way this phrase is used, one gets the impression that religions were involved in taking up weapons to conduct warfare between them. But, in actual fact, it is not religions that wage war, but people. In the past, and also in the present, when people

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A plenary meeting during the second assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Nearly 250 religious representatives from 50 countries met in Leuven, Belgium, August 28–September 3, 1974, and discussed their shared responsibility to work for world peace.

wage war, at the outbreak of, and during, the fighting, justification is expressed in words like “sanctity,” “righteousness,” “civilization,” “humanitarianism,” and “democracy,” which are also conventionally used with a meaning resembling the sacred inviolability of religious belief. Until now, under the great legitimating reason of “a war for civilization,” how many massacres, how much destruction and plunder, have taken place, laying waste the preciousness of life?

But it is not religions that are fighting. People are making use of religion in order to fight. Religions are taken over by people, and people are using them as tools to help them distribute propaganda about their wars. Now, more than ever, it is necessary for us to give power back to the religions. Now, more than ever, we must work toward bringing about dialogue and cooperation among religions and also between religions and various other fields of society, such as politics, economics, education, and culture—religions will thereby be able to actualize their role in bringing about a state of living in mutual harmony and peace between self and others.

In both the Old and New Testaments there is a word with which we are called upon to “repent,” and in Hebrew this is expressed by the word *shuv*, which means “to return; to make repentance.” Without returning to the feet of God, without returning to the path of God, and without creat-

ing within our own hearts a relationship of peace between ourselves and God, how can we give up taking revenge on our enemies, undertake forgiveness and repentance, and achieve the path of compassion in which the spirit of sharing the sorrow and suffering of others prevails?

It must be said that the mission of religionists who invite people to take up the path leading back to God and the Buddha is truly very great. Now, among religionists, we will have to walk together with concern for common problems, such as the happiness and salvation of humankind as well as world peace, going beyond the confines of our shrines and temples, meeting others, having dialogue with others, understanding the true will of God and the Buddha; we will have to work together toward a common purpose, and each exert our greatest efforts—this is what is being asked of us.

More than anything else, religious dialogue begins with encounters. One has an encounter, from which dialogue is born, and from dialogue, understanding flows. And from understanding one another, trust will emerge of itself, and we will reach a state in which we can all work hand in hand in the spirit of cooperation. It is to be sincerely hoped that dialogue among the various religions will be able to transcend conflict, terrorism, and war, and to lead toward cooperation in working together for the achievement of world peace. □

A Mind That Seeks the Truth

by Nichiko Niwano

Large numbers of Japanese youths recently are reported not to be involved in regular full-time work and to not be actively seeking such steady jobs. This social phenomenon should be considered a warning to adults, who in the long period of 60 years since the end of World War II have devoted too much attention to material and selfish things and seem to have forgotten the basic sense of what is really important to human beings.

As adults and parents, we need to humbly reflect on what our attitude has been in leading our lives up to today, and we should determine the best course for young people to follow and explain it to them so they can revive their spirits and realize a purpose that makes life worth living.

Becoming Aroused to Life

There is a Zen saying, “Nothing left over, nothing lacking.” This means that from the time a person is born, he or she has nothing left over and lacks nothing, but is already invested with all the essentials of life. In other words, that we live in the here and now is because as human beings we are supplied with just the right amount of power for life.

When we become aware of this fact, we can know true gratitude, our day-to-day worries and complaints disappear, and we are filled with hope and vigor. A fresh rhythm then enters our lives, and we become able to self-reliantly set a personal goal for the future and advance toward it. Opening our eyes to being caused to live arouses the power to live in us.

What Is Asked of Us

I read in a local newspaper that Pope John Paul II, who ascended to heaven in April of this year, had expressed a wish to be able speak some Japanese before his scheduled visit to Japan in 1981. Despite his very busy schedule, he made time to receive Japanese lessons.

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Rev. Niwano is greeted by H.H. Pope John Paul II during a weekly general audience in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 28, 2004.

I was greatly impressed by the late pope's enthusiasm and desire for learning, and the fact that he reduced his time for meals so he could study and asked that the meaning of each word that he learned be written down beside it.

Founder Nikkyo Niwano, due to his wish to save all people, continually sought the way to the Truth and imparted to us the teachings of impermanence and nonself—the wisdom of the Buddha as preached in the Lotus Sutra.

Through recognizing the Truth and developing the realization of this wisdom, we become aware of the mystery and preciousness of life, and when transmitting the joy we experience from this to other people, we will find a real zest for life.

That we gain this wisdom, and achieve comfort and joy—that was Founder Niwano's wish, and it is what he “asked” of us. □

The Power of Memory and Imagination

by Juan Masiá

Sixty years have passed since the end of World War II. There may be some who have forgotten the tragedies of war, and some who are unafraid of war happening again. The former have weak memories; the latter, weak imaginations.

The former government of my country, Spain, followed the United States' lead regarding the Iraq war, but after the terrorist attack on Madrid on March 11, 2004, subsequent elections ushered in a new government. The voice of the people revived the powers of memory and the imagination.

Two regrettable things about the illegal invasion of Iraq were that the invaders forgot about the past, and lacked the ability to anticipate the future. As was clearly shown in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the war in Afghanistan, peace cannot be built with bombardment. However, these political leaders who failed to recall past mistakes apparently did not have enough imagination to discover any alternative course of action except bombardment. But a nonaggressive alternative is precisely what is needed now and for the future, as has been borne out by the horrible situation in Iraq in recent months.

In this context, the various religions of the world have an opportunity to join hands and play a role in society, and I believe that the world expects them to do so. This is because the religions of the world foster people's ability to hark back to their fundamental roots, and their ability to repent and adopt new types of behavior. Of course, this is distinct from the uses to which religion is put by fanatical fundamentalist politicians. If the religions of the world act loyally to their true natures and join together to build peace, shouldn't they be able to foster the powers of memory and imagination that are needed in today's society?

Imagine the world's religions opposing war and calling for peace. When this does happen, there are usually people who ask "Why are religions trying to interfere in politics?" and academics that protest, flying a flag of misinterpreted "separation of church and state."

When religions are mainly expected to function in society so as to give people hope and make the world a better place, this lends a certain sense of stability to society. However,

when religions start getting actively involved in movements trying to free the world from evil, calling for treatment of the oppressed as human beings, or start taking an active part in peace movements and accusing those who obstruct peace, it is not surprising that societies feel a kind of insecurity toward religion.

Scholars of the sociology of religion have clearly defined this situation. They hold that religion has two roles to play in society. The first is what they call a "therapeutic" role, in which religion confers meaning, and the second, what they call a "prophetic" role, in which religion censures the distortion of society and calls for repentance.

My most devout wish on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II is for the religions of the world to fulfill both these roles. By doing so, they can help people nurture the power of memory, which reflects solemnly on the past, and the power of the imagination, which looks constructively to the future, powers that are so needed today. This will at the same time provide that which our present political leaders most lack. □

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Remembering Hiroshima in Oak Ridge, Tennessee

by Miriam Levering

*A large Japanese temple bell now serves as a symbol of peace
between the United States and Japan in the city that processed
the uranium for the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.*

In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the sites at the center of the destruction wrought by the two atomic bombs dropped from American planes on August 6 and August 9, 1945, have been made into peace parks, where Japanese and many from around the world remember what happened there, pray for the repose of the spirits of the dead, and pray for peace. Until recently, in the United States, there had been no site or monument that served as a place where Americans could express their desires for peace as they remembered these events.

In 1996 a group of citizens in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the town built in 1942 to process uranium for the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, created such a site. It is now the

site of the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell. Three Americans, Shigeko Yoshino Uppuluri, a teacher of the Japanese language, her husband, Ram Uppuluri, a mathematician at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and Alvin Weinberg, former director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, created through their differing visions an influential monument to the memory of World War II, including the events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that brought it to an end.

The Uppuluris and Weinberg had differing visions. Ram Uppuluri thought that a monument that celebrated the peace between Japan and the United States since 1945, and that also expressed Oak Ridge's dedication as a community to building peace in the future, would call attention to how Oak Ridge has changed since 1945. Weinberg thought that the only effective way to prevent further use of nuclear weapons was to "sanctify Hiroshima": to erect a religious taboo against the use of nuclear weapons so coded into religious memory and practice that it would endure over thousands of years. He observed that in Japan, Hiroshima and its sufferings from the bombing were being "sanctified" in ritual and memory. He hoped that Hiroshima would be sanctified in Oak Ridge as well.

History

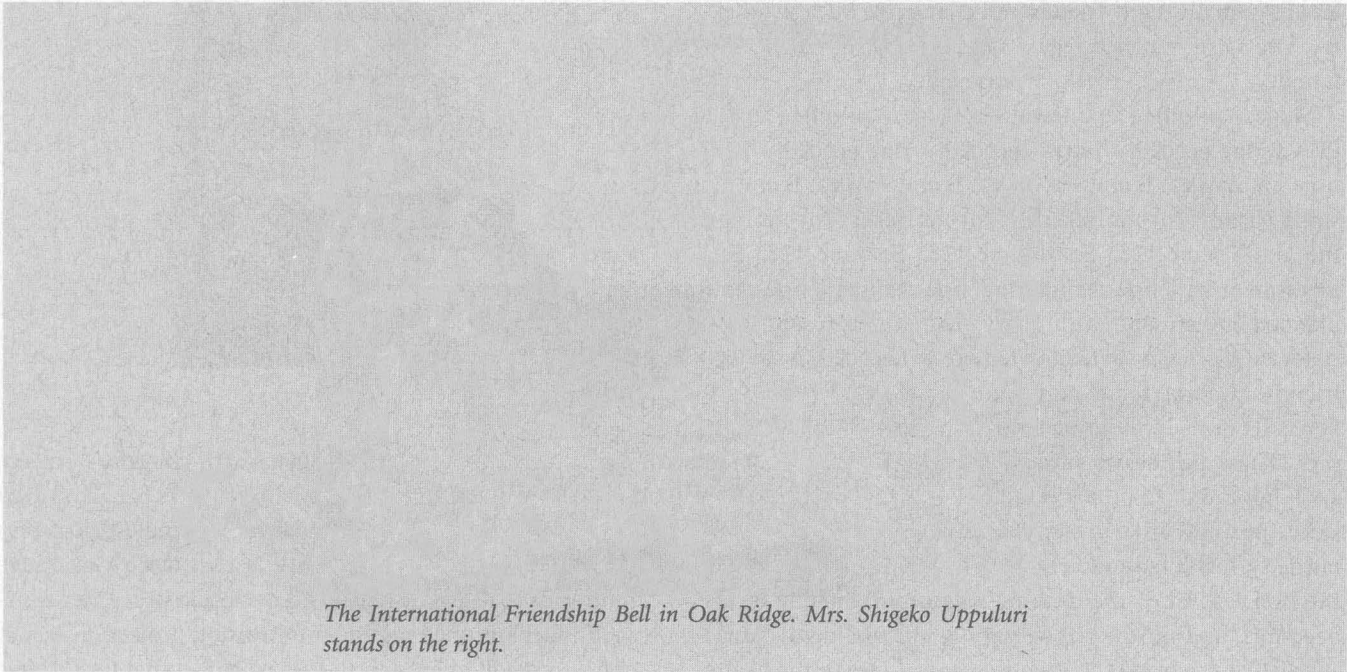
In 1990 the Oak Ridge Community Foundation sought a project to help the city of Oak Ridge commemorate the 50th anniversary of its founding, which would occur in 1992. They announced a competition for a "living memorial." The proposal to erect a Japanese *bonsho* (Buddhist-temple bell) as a "Friendship Bell" in Oak Ridge for the commemoration was developed and submitted by two Oak Ridge citizens, Dr. Venkanta R. R. "Ram" Uppuluri and his wife, Shigeko Yoshino Uppuluri. Ram, a mathematician, was born in India; his wife, Shigeko, was born in Kyoto and

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educated at Doshisha University. The Uppuluris had met as graduate students at Indiana University, had been working in Oak Ridge since 1963, and had raised their son there.

Why did the Uppuluris want a giant Japanese temple bell in Oak Ridge? It was not because the Uppuluris were Buddhists. They were not members of any Buddhist organization in the U.S., nor actively a member of any Buddhist organization abroad. Shigeko's grandfather's family in Fukui Prefecture supplied rice to Higashi Honganji, the head temple of one of the Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land) organizations. Through that connection, Shigeko's grandfather was able to move to Kyoto. Her grandfather was devout and active; when Shigeko was small, she went with

the 1940s and that refurbishes atomic weapons even today, and the Oak Ridge of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory where Ram worked. The meaning of Oak Ridge continued to be defined for most who did not live there by the story of the past, the story of the creation of the Hiroshima bomb. It was important to Ram that others in the future understand that Oak Ridge's story since 1945 was also that of a community working in nuclear science on peaceful uses of atomic energy. Ram got the idea that there needed to be a monument in Oak Ridge that would last a thousand years and convey the message to future generations that Oak Ridge in the postwar period had really been about peace. Ram's son Ram Y. Uppuluri, called Rami by his parents,



The International Friendship Bell in Oak Ridge. Mrs. Shigeko Uppuluri stands on the right.

her grandfather to the temple every day. But after her grandfather's generation, Shigeko and her family in Kyoto were Jodo Shinshu followers in the rather inactive way that many Japanese families belong to temples. In Shigeko's view, "Buddhism is almost gone in Japan. It exists only as a fine mist."

The Bell and Peace: The Uppuluris

Shigeko and Ram Uppuluri could not have created the bell without the help of a host of others. But it is also true that they were able to create the bell because others were inspired by their vision. The core of that vision was an affirmation of, and longing for, peace.

The visions of Shigeko and Ram were not exactly the same. What moved Ram was the contrast between the Oak Ridge portrayed in the August 6 Hiroshima Day demonstrations every year, the Oak Ridge that built "the bomb" in

recalls his now deceased father's interest in such a monument:

"We had free-ranging discussions for several years over our kitchen table. Dad talked about installing a Nandi (a peaceful Hindu cow who is usually shown sitting at the feet of Shiva) after installing a Japanese bell in Bissell Park (the city park that was the eventual home of the Friendship Bell). He emphasized that all major religions have symbols of peace, and hoped to include them all."

A large bell in a temple high above the seacoast near Tokai-mura, seen on one of the couple's visits to Japan, inspired in Ram a desire for such a temple bell in Oak Ridge. He appreciated the deep peace that shrines and temples in Japan made him feel, particularly those with tall trees and the deep tones of large bells. And he understood that such a bell would meet his three criteria for a monument: that

there be no maintenance, that it carry a meaning, and that it last a long time. When the priest at the temple near Tokaimura told him that a bronze bell should last 1,000 years, Ram became committed to the project.

But Ram also felt that the potential significance of the bell went far beyond commemorating the events of 50 years ago and making a statement about Oak Ridge's longing for peace. He wanted to build bridges between Japan and East Tennessee, between East and West.

Shigeko Uppuluri had her own reasons for liking Ram's idea. In the 1970s and 1980s, Shigeko had made herself useful to the young Japanese scientists and their families who came to Oak Ridge from Japan's nuclear laboratories and installations for one or two years. Over the years, Shigeko and Ram made many friends in the Japanese nuclear industry. They also returned regularly to Japan to visit Shigeko's family.

Shigeko and her Japanese friends in Tennessee thought Oak Ridge needed a Japanese temple bell. Japanese were now coming to Tennessee in greater numbers as Matsushita, Nissan, Toyota, and their suppliers built factories in the non-union U.S. South. In 1988 Japanese business investment in Tennessee totaled \$1.2 billion in capital and planned investment, with 45 Japanese businesses in the state employing over 8,000 people. As Shigeko and her friends foresaw, these numbers have grown. As of July 2003, Tennessee was home to 146 Japanese-owned companies. These businesses invested \$7.88 billion in the state and employed just over thirty-seven thousand Tennesseans. Japanese in Tennessee to help run these companies needed a bell they could ring 108 times at the New Year, at the Bon festival of the dead on August 15, the day of the ancestors, and on the anniversary of the ending of World War II. They needed the deep sonorous tones of the bell to go forth as they always had done in Japan to free the souls of their ancestors from the suffering of hell and assure their rebirth in the Pure Land. And perhaps, given Oak Ridge's history as a secret city founded in 1942 to enrich the uranium for the Hiroshima bomb, Oak Ridge itself needed a bell to help the souls of all the dead of World War II. It needed a bell to pacify the unsettled spirits of the place so that it was safe for present residents. But most of all, Shigeko and her friends wanted a bell to ring for peace and enduring friendship between Oak Ridge and Japan. And they felt that the Japanese in Tennessee would want it too.

Shigeko and Ram sought community support in Oak Ridge for a Friendship Bell to promote tourism. "The purpose of the friendship bell is to attract the tourism of the Japanese in Tennessee to the natural beauty of the area, and to symbolize the friendship of the two countries. It is

something unusual. There are enough Oprylands and Dollywoods (theme parks in Tennessee); we need to enhance the beauty of our area," the Uppuluris are quoted as saying in 1988. "We hope not only to unite the Japanese in the area, but to perform colorful celebrations on the days the bell will ring, that will attract people from all over." Community leaders hoped for funding from Japanese companies.

As it happened, Japanese companies in Tennessee gave little support to the bell project. Rather, Shigeko, and later Alvin Weinberg, found support in Japan and the United States. The citizens of Nakamachi, Oak Ridge's sister city of 38,000 inhabitants and the location of Japan's nuclear

Dr. Alvin M. Weinberg

fusion project, donated \$23,000 early. Shigeko's sincere longing for peace, and her hard work on its behalf, moved Sotetsu Iwasawa, a famous traditional temple-bell maker in Kyoto, to offer to cast the bell at cost when Oak Ridge fund-raising flagged. Shigeko's devotion to peace, her courage in tackling such a large fund-raising project on behalf of a very small town, and the amazing fact that Oak Ridge, birthplace of "the bomb," should reach out on its own initiative to express friendship toward Japan by commissioning a temple bell—these three elements brought the project attention in Japan. The Honda Motor Company plant at Suzuka, Japan, shipped the bell to Oak Ridge at no cost. The nuclear scientists of Japan contributed money, as did those of the United States and Europe when Weinberg made them aware of the project. The final stages of the project were supported through the efforts of another retired director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Herman Postma. Unfortunately, Ram Uppuluri died before he could see the completed bell.

The Bell and the Tradition of Non-use: Alvin Weinberg

At over 90 years old, Alvin M. Weinberg is a remarkable man. He had a 26-year career as research director and then director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He was a

pioneer in nuclear energy, in which he strongly believes, and a designer of nuclear reactors. Weinberg is also the author of eight books, and an original thinker who has been called “the master of the majestic concept.” Weinberg contributed the phrases “big science,” “trans-science,” “technological fix,” “Faustian bargain,” and “first nuclear era” to the vocabulary of scientists, nuclear engineers, and policymakers. In all of the arenas in which he offered leadership, as a physicist, proponent of nuclear energy, administrator, lecturer, writer, and policymaker, he was, as one of his former employees wrote, “near the top, honored, sought after, respected, and listened to.” He served on the President’s Science Advisory Committee, and was director of the Office of Energy, Research, and Development in the White House under President Richard Nixon.

Weinberg joined the Manhattan Project in Chicago in 1941, shortly after completing his Ph.D. in physics. Weinberg assisted the famous physicists Eugene Wigner and Enrico Fermi in the design of the first nuclear reactor to achieve self-sustaining criticality, by determining the optimal spacing for the fuel elements. Weinberg did the same for the Oak Ridge Graphite Reactor. The graphite reactor went critical on November 4, 1943, and soon produced the world’s first significant amounts of plutonium, the fuel in the Nagasaki bomb. When the scientific and engineering problems connected with the production of enriched uranium and plutonium had been solved, the Manhattan Project scientists turned their attention to the ethics of using atomic bombs. Weinberg, now assigned to the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, and seventeen other scientists signed a petition to President Harry S. Truman on July 13, 1945 that read in part:

“We respectfully petition that the use of atomic bombs, particularly against cities [in Japan], be sanctioned by you as the Chief Executive only under the following conditions: (1) Opportunity has been given to the Japanese to surrender on terms ensuring them the possibility of peaceful development in their homeland. (2) Convincing warnings have been given that a refusal to surrender will be followed by the use of a new weapon. (3) Responsibility for use of atomic bombs is shared by our allies.”

The petition never reached President Truman.

Weinberg did not again take up the topic of the ethics of the use of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki until 1985, when the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* asked him to write a short piece for the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima. On this occasion, Weinberg turned to the question of how human beings now and far into the future could defend themselves from the destructive power of their own weapons. Weinberg felt that educating the nation’s citizens and the world’s, Einstein’s proposed solution, would not be

adequate. Nuclear technology will continue to exist, and the temptation to use it in pursuit of power or in self-defense will be great. Some powerful force must be created to help humans shun all further use of the bomb. Weinberg decided that this force must be religion, for only in religion is memory encoded in a way that harnesses powerful emotions in the construction of taboos. The use of the bomb must become a universal human religious taboo. There must be stories, myths, and ceremonies reinforcing the need for the taboo.

Weinberg wrote that on the fortieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima he had witnessed on television the memorial ceremonies at Hiroshima. He saw “an outpouring of emotion, a display of concern, that goes much beyond any previous observation of the Hiroshima bombing.” He wrote: “Are we witnessing a gradual sanctification of Hiroshima—that is, an elevation of Hiroshima even to the status of a profoundly mystical event, an event ultimately of the same religious force as Biblical events? I cannot prove it, but I am convinced that the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima, with its vast outpouring of concern, its huge demonstrations, wide media coverage, bears resemblance to the observance of major religious holidays.”¹

To Weinberg, this was a hopeful sign for humanity. “When we speak of avoiding nuclear war, we are speaking not of the next decade or two; we are talking of millennia! How can humanity really accept, at the most fundamental level, the absolute necessity of avoiding the nuclear holocaust—100, 1,000 years after Hiroshima—unless Hiroshima becomes a ghastly legend, accepted by all and as well known to all as the crucifixion is known to Christians, Cain’s slaying of Abel is known to Jews, and the Hegira is known to Muslims? In short, only by sanctifying Hiroshima can we expect its lesson to be learned and relearned forever—even to the burnings, the radiation sickness, the awful obliteration.”²

In 1991 two significant events happened in Weinberg’s life. He visited Hiroshima for the first time, intensifying his impression that Hiroshima was becoming sanctified, and he became honorary chairman of the bell committee within the Oak Ridge Community Foundation. He promised to raise the money to complete the project, and immediately wrote in the *Oak Ridge* newspaper: “If we believe that nuclear weapons must be tabooed, and that such taboos to be everlasting must achieve a mythic or religious status, then I think Oak Ridge as well as Hiroshima should be sanctified. We produced the uranium-235 that went into the Hiroshima bomb. . . .”

In 1992 Weinberg became the actual chairman of the bell committee. When the bell in Oak Ridge was completed, he wrote of it as a replica of the Peace Bell in the

On one of the panels of the International Friendship Bell, the words "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" are paired, accompanied by the dates "August 6, 1945" and "August 9, 1945."

Hiroshima Peace Park, though in fact it was much larger and with quite different surface designs. Weinberg wrote in 1994: "I hope it will become a shrine for the many visitors who, by their pilgrimage to the Friendship Bell, will be participating in the sanctification of Hiroshima and the permanence of the tradition of non-use [of nuclear weapons]."³

A bitter opposition to the city's accepting and endorsing the Friendship Bell developed in 1991, 1993, and 1995. Many opponents felt that the bell was meant as an apology by Oak Ridge to Japan, or the city of Hiroshima, for making the uranium for the Hiroshima bomb. After a compromise brokered by the city council's Bell Policy Committee, the city of Oak Ridge accepted ownership of the bell and pavilion, and held a dedication ceremony in May of 1996. Weinberg arranged for a scientific conference on "The Doctrine of No Further Use of Nuclear Weapons" to be held in Oak Ridge in conjunction with the dedication events.

Meanings of the Temple Bell in Oak Ridge

Visitors to Oak Ridge can now visit a pavilion housing a large temple bell. Weighing more than four tons, the bell measures approximately 6.5 feet (1.95 meter) tall and 4.5 feet (1.35 meter) in diameter. It is in traditional temple-bell shape: a hemisphere on top of a barrel that is slightly wider at the bottom than at the top. On the exterior of the bell are bosses or knobs described as numbering 108, but in fact numbering 132. A frieze of lotus leaves and blossoms runs along the bottom border. The surface of the barrel of the bell is divided into four panels. The bell is hung from a single dragon-shaped hanging loop. It is struck from outside on a chrysanthemum medallion with a palm-log striker.

The four panels on the Oak Ridge bell do not contain Buddhist scenes. Two of the panels, designed by Oak Ridge artist Susannah Harris, present paired scenes. The East Tennessee scene shows the mountains of East Tennessee, a mockingbird (the Tennessee state bird), irises, and dogwood blossoms. Over them all is a rainbow with an atom at the end. The Japanese scene shows Mount Fuji, cherry blossoms, flying cranes, and over all a rainbow with an atom at the end. The scenes are full of natural beauty, calm and peaceful. "Beauty, peace, and atoms for peace, in Oak Ridge and in Japan," the panels seem to say.

On one of the panels on the back of the bell, the words "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" are paired, accompanied by the dates "August 6, 1945" and "August 9, 1945." On the other panel the names and dates of the Pearl Harbor attack (December 7, 1941) and V-J Day (September 2, 1945) are paired. On one side the words "International friendship" run vertically between the panels; on the reverse is the word "Peace."

All who see the Friendship Bell in Oak Ridge will ascribe meanings to it. Some of those will see it as a marvelous accomplishment of medieval Japanese technology, one reason, no doubt, that Buddhists have drawn it into their web of sacred meanings. Most will assume that it was do-

The Memorial Cenotaph in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, on which are engraved the words, "Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil."

nated by a Japanese, Korean, or Japanese-American group, as is true of other similar bells in North America and Europe.

Those who know that the bell is primarily the creation of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation may see it as an apology by Oak Ridgers to the Japanese people for the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. In 1991, 1993, and 1995 many Oak Ridgers publicly opposed the project because they read it as an expression of guilt and shame about something that was in their view a proud accomplishment. For example, William J. Wilcox, former technical director of the Oak Ridge nuclear weapons plants K-25 and Y-12, wrote to the city council's Bell Policy Committee in 1995: "For months now, . . . I've sat around hating the Bell. . . . A lot of us think its message and usage will officially change Oak Ridge from a once proud Atomic City and major part (for 50 years) of our Nation's nuclear defense to a city perpetually remembering with sadness the horror of Hiroshima and endorsing the political agenda of Banning-the-Bomb."⁴

For some viewers, as for Shigeko and Ram Uppuluri, the meaning of the bell will be fully expressed both in the names and dates on its back panels, reminders of darkness, and in the peaceful scenes of Japan and East Tennessee found in the bell's two front relief panels. The bell will remind viewers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and kindle the hope that they will be the last such events. It will also bring to mind the blessings of natural beauty, well-being, and peaceful life—and atoms in the service of those goals in

both countries. It was the Uppuluris' intent that, even if Hiroshima and the events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki should cease to be sanctified, in Japan as well as in Oak Ridge, a thousand years hence future generations looking at the bell would come to understand this aspiration.

Some viewers will share the vision of Alvin Weinberg, expressed many times in speeches between 1985 and the end of the millennium. They will see the bell not as an apology, but as inviting memories of the Manhattan Project and the events of August 1945, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They will hope that the Oak Ridge Friendship Bell will acquire the same kind of transcendent, religious character as the Hiroshima Bell, so that nuclear holocausts such as occurred at Hiroshima will never be repeated. They will be glad that a site for remembering Hiroshima has been created in Oak Ridge.

For others, the bell will invite memory of the past and commitment to building peace in the future. It will forever symbolize Oak Ridge's ability to reflect deeply on the moral ambiguity of the historical events in which Oak Ridge played a major role. □

Notes

1. Weinberg, *The Sanctification of Hiroshima*, p. 34.
2. Ibid.
3. Weinberg, *The First Nuclear Era*, 1994.
4. Memo from William J. Wilcox to Ms. Diantha Pare and [the Oak Ridge City] Council's Committee on the Bell, Sept. 27, 1995, p. 1.

Biotechnology and the Problem of Desire

by William R. LaFleur

While appreciating the altruism behind organ donation for transplant surgery, this scholar considers important the Japanese insistence on not overlooking the troubling moral posture of the organ recipient.

Many decades ago when I had just begun to study Japanese and was thinking about making studies of Buddhism in Japan, I was challenged by a young Japanese man who was one of my language teachers. He said that studying Buddhism would be a waste of my time. In order to convince me to take up something that, from his point of view, would be much more relevant to today's society and its needs, he quoted an old maxim, one known to most Japanese: "Excavators of mummies

themselves become mummies." [*Miira tori ga miira ni naru*]. If I were to attempt to find an aphorism in the West making the same point, it might be: "Go for wool and come back shorn!" His counsel included such a warning.

The phrase about mummy excavation has stuck in my head. Even though the young man's words did not dissuade me from my intention of studying Japanese Buddhism, and I am pleased that he did not convince me otherwise, I must confess that at times I worried that he might have been right. I would, for instance, hear, from both Japanese and others, that what I was studying had in today's Japan become nothing more than "funerary Buddhism" and something without any moral relevance within society. This may be part of the reason why in my earliest work I decided to focus on figures from the past—Saigyō, a twelfth-century samurai who became a war-deploring monk-poet, and Dogen, the thirteenth-century Zen figure whose prose was richly ambiguous but whose devotion to the Buddhist Dharma was forthright and clear.

Only more recently have I turned my attention to modern, and especially to contemporary, Japan. And that has forced me to ask myself with renewed urgency: Are those of us engaged in this, in fact, studying a mummy and trying to see life where there may be none? Expressed bluntly the question becomes: Is Japan's Buddhism today nothing more than a funeral industry posing as a religion of relevance?

I am not as ready as some, both inside and outside of Japan, to pass such a harsh judgment on Buddhism in Japan today. My impression is that the lay Buddhist movement of Japan has become quite strong and has in many unheralded ways contributed much to what in Japan

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remains, in spite of many threats, a strong emphasis on interpersonal relations, on social behavior that expresses concern for the feelings of others [*omoiyari*], and on thinking of children, their upbringing, and measures taken so that future generations may inherit a livable world. The impact of Japanese Buddhists on our world's thinking about ecology and the future has been strong. And, of course, in the wake of the tragedies of World War II, the involvement of Japan's Buddhists in efforts to secure world peace have been especially significant.

But there is another area in which I find evidence of vitality in Japanese Buddhism. It is in the way that many Japanese are giving serious thought to some of the most crucial questions having to do with life, health, being ill, dying, and how to treat the newly dead. These are areas where our newest and boldest technologies have created a wide range of questions we humans have never faced before. Organ transplantation, in-vitro fertilization, fetal testing, stem-cell research, surrogate motherhood, organ purchasing, xeno-transplantation, ova-for-sale, childbearing at an advanced age, and cloning: all these present us with dilemmas and moral entanglements that confront us in an unprecedented way. And the pace of technological developments—and therefore also the presentation to us of ever new dilemmas—quickens.

Inordinate Desire

The amount of writing on these topics in Japanese is vast. On just one issue, the ethics of transplanting organs from persons called “brain-dead,” Japan has, at least in my view, conducted the world's most far-reaching debate and discussion. Much of the rest of the world has gone over this much more superficially, often assuming that if something is technologically feasible and promoted by medical experts, it must also be “good.” Most Japanese were unwilling to go along with that. And although the reasons for having moral qualms about “harvesting” the organs of someone only “brain-dead” can be multiple and varied, in my view one of the most important considerations presented in Japan has to do with the mental state of the person wanting and waiting to acquire the organs of someone else. Japanese writers raise a question I do not find being expressed in the West—namely, how can a potential recipient avoid being filled with *inordinate desire* once he or she is placed in a situation of being able to profit enormously due to another's death?

The word “inordinate” is important here. Buddhists recognize, of course, that the desire to live and to continue living is ordinarily part of us, not only because we are humans but, even more basically, because we have animal instincts. And among our instincts the one to remain alive

is the strongest. Life is what we want; death is ordinarily what we wish to avoid. And in view of this, Buddhists, who throughout history have been allied with those who practice the healing arts, have no fundamental objection to therapies, including surgical and biomedical procedures, that assist a person to avoid early death and continue living.

In Europe and America many (but not all!) people today hold that any medical or technological procedure that allows a person to live longer must be considered “good.” Anything that promises to prevent or even postpone death—since death is assumed to be the exact opposite of good—must necessarily be morally acceptable. Therefore,

Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun

A man who has received heart transplant surgery in a hospital in Osaka sits for a press interview on the day he is released from the hospital, in July 1999.

developments in technology, it is widely thought, should automatically be greeted as allies and weapons in the ongoing human struggle against evil and death.

I have learned over the years that the view of life and death taken up within Buddhism does not accept that level of dualism. Its position is that it is perfectly possible to affirm very emphatically that “Life is good!” without jumping to the conclusion that, therefore, death must always and everywhere be bad. Our personal experience, in fact, confirms this: Most of us have known persons whose sufferings were so lengthy and intense that their dying was greeted by us and by the agonized persons themselves as a relief, a release, even as “good.” So although we can and should prize life, we need not view death as the expression or fruit of evil. Zen master Dogen got it right: “When life comes, you should just give yourself to life; when death comes, you should give yourself to death. You should neither desire them nor hate them.”¹

These challenging sentences in Dogen were shown and explained to me decades ago by Professor Masao Abe, a leading interpreter of Buddhism and Dogen to the West. They have stuck with me. What I find terribly important in them are two things: first, that Dogen takes living and dying as fully natural processes, not things to which we need attach the labels “good” and “bad”; and, second, that what we need to see and then rid ourselves of is the confusion and suffering that results from an *inordinate* hating of death and desiring of life.

I insert the word “inordinate” here because, from all we know of Dogen in other contexts, we may surmise that he would not have found fault with the life-instinct already programmed into us as organic beings. What is merely organic is not what gives us our specifically human troubles. Dogen’s concern was with the nasty, sometimes almost demonic, tricks our human minds play on us—most especially the trouble we give ourselves (and others!) by refusing to give ourselves to life when living and by refusing to give ourselves to death when dying. Our “enemy” is not death itself so much as the way in which our deluded minds place over both death and life highly exaggerated and false narratives of “good” and “evil,” what is to be desired and what is to be hated, and what measures we must take to keep death away *at all costs*.

Is Death Our Enemy?

Here I find something especially interesting. In what I have been reading in the books and articles that Japanese have been writing about medicine and bioethics, I do not find evidence of the notion that death is some kind of enemy against which we humans must marshal every medical and technological tool we have or can engineer in order to bring

it to defeat. That is, one does not find in the Japanese discussions what Renée C. Fox and Judith P. Swazey discovered when doing research on American organ-transplant surgeons, namely, “a bellicose, ‘death is the enemy’ perspective; a rescue oriented and often zealous determination to maintain life at any cost; and a relentless, hubris-refusal to accept limits.”² Fox and Swazey found this outlook disturbing, actually leading to distress and travail in patients.

What does this tell us? I suggest that, although we cannot assume that most Japanese writing today about bioethical matters have read Dogen or have even given a lot of conscious thought to how the Buddhist tradition ought to have relevance in this area (although some have), it is probably the case that something of the classic Buddhist outlook on life and death has a presence, even if not consciously recognized, in the general Japanese view of such matters. And this may be why in the Japanese materials on bioethics I have been reading I find so many references to the problem of *yokubo*—namely “desire” in intensified, almost “unnatural” forms. Naoki Morishita, whose knowledge of the Buddhist tradition and philosophy is deep, writes of finding “a swollen, unbounded desire” and “desire that has no brakes on it” in contemporary society’s quest for biotechnical solutions to the problem of death. Morishita encourages us to be suspicious of the unholy alliance today among such pumped-up desires, the promises of technology, and the commodification of so much of our lives.³ But I find it interesting that Koyata Washida, a philosopher much less likely to cite Buddhism as the source of his concerns, also forefronts the problem of inordinate desire in his sharp criticisms of the ease with which some today seem ready to envision the extension of their own physical lives by gaining access to the organs of persons declared to be “brain-dead.”⁴

The Balking Point

Depending somewhat on the difference in their religious and intellectual traditions, different societies have what I call differing “balking points” when facing not only the prospects but especially the problems that come along with modern biotechnology. And it seems clear to me that the “balking point” for the Japanese came when it became technically possible for one person to extend his or her life by becoming the recipient of the organs of someone who had been declared “brain-dead.” The Japanese balked for a variety of reasons, but surely among them was the sense that one person’s desire for the organs of someone still breathing and perspiring crosses an ethical line. And the balking point often comes through a sense of disgust and repulsion.

Professor Tetsuo Yamaori, a widely read and respected

authority on Buddhism, Japan, and comparative cultures, has written about the point at which he personally balked. He acknowledges his own debt to modern medicine, having himself benefited greatly from hospitalizations and surgery. "But when people started playing around with the notion of 'brain-death' in connection with the technology of organ transplantation, I somehow gained an image of something rather repulsive. 'This is impermissible,' I thought. This is so because there is an etiquette that is part of human dying, and a procedure such as this one, I sensed, violates it."⁵

Now it is, of course, true that in Europe and America, unlike Japan, the introduction of organ transplants from persons deemed "brain-dead" did not constitute such a balking point. This was, I think, in part because the defenders of this new technology there very early on caused the public focus to be on the great generosity of any organ donor and, consequently, drew attention completely away from the mindset of the potential recipient. During the late 1960s, when such transplants first became possible, the public rhetoric in America laid great emphasis upon how the donation of one's organs is an especially "beautiful" expression of Christian love.⁶ In addition, within American society, what Professor Yamaori calls the "etiquette of dying"—something wanting truly human dying to be within the family rather than isolated from them and with machinery at the ready to excise reusable organs—had already been on the wane.

While I am among those in the West able to appreciate

the point about organ donation being a fine expression of altruistic love, I believe there is something very important in the Japanese insistence that we not overlook the psychology and troubling moral posture of the organ recipient. Transplantation involves a taking-out but also a putting-in. To ignore or, even more seriously, to conceal from the public the mindset of the person desiring another's organs strikes me as ethically questionable. And this may be so because rationalized organ transplantation seems now to function as *the* precedent for a range of biotech procedures through which what may be an inordinate desire for longer biological life is made to seem perfectly normal, moral, and acceptable.

The Contribution

Because it is Japan that raises the question of inordinate desire, Japan can, I suggest, potentially make a very significant contribution to what should become a much more worldwide and multivoiced discussion of the range of bioethical questions we face together. And, to return to the question asked at the outset of this essay, I feel quite keenly that the articulated thinking of the Japanese people about these questions—including their readiness to "balk" when a procedure strikes them as lacking in moral persuasiveness—tells us that there remain vital signs in what some had a bit too quickly declared to be a mummy. The religious and philosophical communities in Japan can make a great contribution in this domain. To raise questions about what is right and what may be wrong is surely to show signs

Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun

Buddhist priests explaining Buddhist ideas on the morality of organ transplants in a meeting with a group of people preparing to set up a website on the issue, in Tokyo in 1999.

of life. And where there is life, there is the potential for an even greater contribution to how we should come to grips with some of the most basic questions facing humankind today. □

Notes

1. Dogen. *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Translated and annotated by Norman Waddell and Masao Abe (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 106.

2. Renée C. Fox and Judith P. Swazey, *Spare Parts: Organ Replacement in American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 199.

3. Naoki Morishita, *Shi no sentaku: Inochi no genba kara kangaeru* [The Choice of Death: Thoughts at the Scene of Life] (Tokyo: Madosha, 1999).

4. Koyata Washida, *Noshiron: Ningen to hiningen no aida* [Brain Death: Between Humans and Non-Humans] (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1988); see also his *Yokubo no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Desire] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1997).

5. Tetsuo Yamaori, *Kokoro no saho: Sei e no kamae, shi e no kamae* [Etiquette of the Heart: The Stance toward Life, the Stance toward Death] (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2002), p. 77.

6. See William R. LaFleur, "From Agapé to Organs: Religious Difference between Japan and America in Judging the Ethics of the Transplant," *Zygon* 37:3 [Sept. 2002], pp. 623–42.

Hometown Buddhist Folktales

The Ogre of Yuka Mountain

Once upon a time, on Yuka Mountain, there lived a bad ogre who ravaged the village. The villagers, at their wits' end, asked a strong warrior from the capital to rid them of the ogre.

"All right, I'll do it!"

The warrior from the capital bravely set out to vanquish the ogre. However, on his way there, his shoe broke. And just then, an old man with a white beard appeared from nowhere and, saying, "Wear this," gave him a new shoe.

So he put it on, and as he continued along the mountain road, he started to feel hungry. He could not fight on an empty stomach. And when he again had a problem, once again the old man appeared and, saying, "Eat this," gave him a box filled with food. The warrior gratefully ate up the food, and again set out climbing the mountain road.

And then it happened. A great big ogre suddenly jumped out. The warrior valiantly pursued the ogre, but of course the ogre was by nature very formidable and did not give up.

The old man quickly appeared by his side and said, "This sake is poisonous for the ogre to drink!"

And he put the sake in the warrior's hand. The warrior quickly made the ogre drink the sake, and the ogre collapsed head over heels.

The ogre said, "I am defeated. From now on, I will be the servant of the deity of this mountain and help people, so please forgive me." He then turned into a white fox.

In fact, the old man was really the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman who protected the village, and the warrior from the capital went on to become the great general Sakanoue no Tamuramaro. □

(A story from Okayama Prefecture)

The Rice-cake Calling Jizo

In a certain place, there was a man called Ichirobei who made rice cakes. Ichirobei was of a very deep faith, and every day without fail he went to pray to a certain Jizo [Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha] in Iwafune.

Thanks to that, the rice-cake shop was very prosperous.

"This, too, is thanks to Jizo," Ichirobei would say, and in thanks he always made an offering of a very large rice cake.

When Ichirobei grew old, his son Jirobei inherited the business. Jirobei being a little forgetful and a bit stingy, he forgot to make offerings to Jizo and sometimes made the rice cakes small.

From around that time, the rice-cake shop customers diminished by one, and two, and gradually it was not prosperous. Finally, when his son Saburobei inherited the business, it was in such a state that there was not even any rice with which to make rice cakes.

Then one night, Saburobei was sleeping, when he heard a voice.

"Saburobei, bring me a rice cake!"

It was the voice of the Iwafune Jizo calling, wasn't it? Saburobei was reminded of his grandfather, Ichirobei, so immediately the next day, he borrowed money, made a big rice cake, offered it to Jizo, and apologized from the bottom of his heart for what had happened up to then.

Henceforth, the rice-cake shop flourished even more than in the past. And the Iwafune Jizo became known as the "Rice-cake Calling Jizo," although no one knows who said it first. □

(A story from Tochigi Prefecture)

Finding a Common Ethic

The 22nd Niwano Peace Prize Commemorative Dialogue between Dr. Hans Küng and Rev. Nichiko Niwano

The 22nd Niwano Peace Prize was awarded to Dr. Hans Küng, a Roman Catholic theologian and president of the Global Ethic Foundation in Germany and Switzerland.

Together with his contributions to interfaith dialogue and cooperation, Dr. Küng's advocacy of a "Global Ethic" as a way of realizing world peace has won him recognition around the world. In this commemorative dialogue with Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president of the Niwano Peace Foundation, he spoke of two aspects that should serve as signposts in this confused world: a common ethic and a universal sense of values.

The Propounding of a "Global Ethic" Is a Historic Achievement

Editor: First, we would like to begin by asking President Niwano to tell us why the 22nd Niwano Peace Prize was awarded to Dr. Küng.

Niwano: Dr. Küng holds the abiding conviction that the goal of all religions is one, and he has actively devoted himself to having dialogues not only with Christian religionists but also with those of every faith. I have heard that others call him "the forerunner of a theology of dialogue," which I think is most pertinent.

In particular, he has especially focused upon the fundamental sense of values and universal ethic at the basis of the various religions, and has exerted great efforts in order to establish them as a moral foundation common to all humanity. He propounded a Global Ethic based upon four irrevocable directives, including respect for life, which, as a religionist, I find most encouraging. It was truly a historic achievement.

Furthermore, in order to make better and more widely known the importance of the Global Ethic, he has continually delivered his message through such activities as world conferences and publishing, which, speaking from the point of view of religion, constitutes a very important aspect of dissemination.

Editor: Dr. Küng, could you give us your impression of having been chosen as the recipient of the 22nd Niwano Peace Prize?

Küng: For me, being awarded this Niwano Peace Prize was a surprise, a joy, and an encouragement. It was a surprise,

because I am well known as a scholar who is rather outspoken, and that is usually not a reason to get a prize. It was for me a special joy to receive this prize, because it is known throughout the whole world, and because it places value upon my work for peace among religions and for a Global Ethic, and that is a very rare distinction. And third, it is a great encouragement, because the Niwano Peace Prize awards one a certain authority, not only in Asia, but also in the West, as it is very well respected, and, of course, the great honorarium which accompanies it can be used for interreligious purposes.

The Source of All Existence Is One

Editor: The theme of this dialogue is "Finding a Common Ethic." At the opposite pole from a common ethic is the existence of a self-centered, individualistic sense of values. In fact, the stance of "It is I who am right!" is itself the cause of several types of friction. What are your opinions about this reality?

Niwano: Thoughts such as "It is I who am right!" or "Only we are right!" are, after all, only one way of expressing that all others are wrong, which is a very confrontational mindset.

Shakyamuni did not preach such an approach, but rather taught that because the source of all existence is one, we should not confront one another but attempt to achieve harmony. I believe that it is important to strive for a harmonious world in which things are not viewed in a confrontational or even relative manner, but in which everything is seen as one.

Küng: Because Rev. Niwano mentioned the Buddha's way, I think it is important to mention that Jesus of Nazareth was absolutely against every thought of self-centeredness,

Dr. Hans Küng

and central to the Christian message is the concept that you should love your neighbor and even love your enemies. So the European nations were not really following the Christian way when they denigrated others and considered them enemies against whom they had to fight. This self-centered, self-righteous attitude among nations is a specific characteristic of European history, where all the nations thought that they are right and said that God is with them and that the others are wrong and God is against them. And because of this attitude, we had numerous wars in Europe, and ultimately we were involved in two world wars.

Fortunately, after World War II, we had a change of paradigm in Europe, which brought about a different attitude. Now some sixty years have passed since the end of World War II, and we would be wise to celebrate the fact that we have now had these sixty years of peace, and this is because of the changed fundamental attitude, which is no longer self-centered, but which sees others as partners, not as enemies.

President [George W.] Bush said, "You're either with us or against us," but that is the old attitude and a relapse into the former paradigm. I should mention that in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, when he was asked by his disciples to bring fire to certain people in order to destroy them,

said, "No, who is not against us is for us" (Mk 9:40; Lk 9:50), and that is an inclusive attitude, not an antagonistic attitude. And that means that you have to establish partnership with other people, and not make war against them.

Editor: In considering a world in which people can live harmoniously together, and in which a fair distribution of wealth must be sought, do you think that we can achieve both the happiness of the individual and the happiness of the whole at the same time?

Küng: I believe that if you think only about yourself, then that is a very shortsighted vision of the world. We are living in a world in which there is complete interdependence of everybody. Today, no individual, no nation can consider itself in isolation from others.

I should add that the happiness of everybody is of course not simply a question of charity; it is a question of restructuring the global economy, which is very unbalanced. And here there are a lot of actions that need to be taken by politicians, bankers, business people, and international organizations.

A Large Movement to Go Beyond Self-Centeredness

Editor: Concerning fair distribution on the basis of economics, Dr. Küng has mentioned that we must not consider it a question of charity and benevolence.

Niwano: I agree with him wholeheartedly. But because human beings tend to be self-centered, there are difficulties involved in achieving a fair distribution of wealth. The famous Japanese poet and author of children's books Kenji Miyazawa has left behind these words: "Individual happiness is impossible until the entire world gains happiness." While being the sincere wish of humanity, this is also the wish of the Buddha. It is more important than anything else that we all firmly embrace that fundamental wish.

Editor: How can we possibly overcome and go beyond our self-centered nature?

Niwano: In Buddhism, we have the teaching, "All beings possess the buddha-nature." Put simply, this means that the lives of all living beings originate from the same source. To know about, become aware of, and awaken to this fact may help us greatly to go beyond self-centeredness.

Küng: I think that the center of Christian teaching, the ethical teaching of it, is of course the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus, which indicates a very specific line. And I should

mention one or two important things: Jesus says, "If someone compels you to walk a mile with him, walk two miles" (Mt 5:41). That means that it is not enough to just follow the law; you must be generous and do something more. Another aspect of the same would be, if you were offended, to forgive. "Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Mt 18:21–22)—that means without limit. That kind of thought should be a principle not only among individuals, but among religions, and among nations.

The Moral Foundation That Saves Human Beings from Despair

Editor: Dr. Küng, you have said, "An ethic already exists within the religious teachings of the world, which can counter the global distress. This ethic can supply the moral foundation for a better individual and a global order: a vision that can lead men and women away from despair and society away from chaos." We would like to ask you how you became convinced that a universal ethic exists.

Küng: As a Christian theologian, I began to study the central questions of Christianity and of humanity. And I worked first for the mutual understanding of the Christian churches, and for that, though still a young theologian, I was called to the Second Vatican Council, where we realized that we must work not only for the unity of the Christian churches, but also for a better understanding of the world religions. And I came to discover the often quoted principle that there can be no peace among nations without peace among religions. And there can be no peace among religions without dialogue between religions. This program of dialogue between religions is the opposite of Professor Huntington's view of a clash of religions and civilizations. And my last step was to learn that even if we disagree in many ways—in our faith, in our dogmas, in theory—among the different religions, we agree in many ways in practice. And I discovered, for instance, that four of the five precepts for lay Buddhists are practically the same as the commandments in the Hebrew scriptures, in the Decalogue, and also in the New Testament—not to kill, not to lie, not to steal, not to abuse sexuality. So let me conclude that a global ethic is therefore not another religion, and also it is not a system of doctrine, but a set of very elementary ethical standards for living together, based upon reverence for life, justice, truthfulness, and humanity.

Niwano: The four precepts Dr. Küng has mentioned,

Rev. Nichiko Niwano

including that against the taking of life, are indeed similar to the Buddhist precepts. But in Buddhism, we have another one, which prohibits the drinking of alcohol. That one is rather hard for many of us to keep. (*Laughter.*)

Küng: I did not mention the precept not to use intoxicants because it is not universal. And thus I did not include in the Global Ethic anything that is not universal. (*Laughter.*)

Niwano: There is a Japanese didactic poem that I often quote, which contains these lines: "Climbing separately, / Though the paths from the foot of the mountain are many, / When you reach the mountaintop, / You can gaze at the same moon.*"

Küng: Yes, that's exactly right.

Niwano: The part that says "Climbing separately, / Though the paths from the foot of the mountain are many" refers to the specificity and disparity of doctrines, rites, and rituals. The latter half, "When you reach the mountaintop, / You can gaze at the same moon," says that even though expressed differently, there is only one "origin," be it God or the Buddha. In that sense, the fact that Dr. Küng's four

precepts have become part of his Global Ethic is truly wonderful.

Küng: Thank you.

The Most Basic Teaching Is Respect for Life

Editor: Concerning the idea that a universal ethic exists in all religions, what do you think is the most important teaching?

Niwano: I think it is integrated in the precept not to take life. It is respect for life. One of the most basic teachings of Buddhism is “All things are impermanent.” It is precisely because all things are impermanent that we can receive this very rare and fortunate chance to live. In essence, the sanc-

to yourself.” You find this principle not only in Confucianism, and in Buddhism, but also, of course, in Judaism, in Christianity, and in Islam.

Niwano: I believe that Buddhist compassion and Confucian benevolence are the same as the concept that is expressed in Christian love. The Buddhist concept that “all things are impermanent” means that there is absolutely nothing in this world that stays the same even for an instant and does not constantly undergo change, that nothing can be stationary or unchanging, and it is upon that very basis that we can become aware of the sanctity of all life.

In addition, the teaching that “nothing has an ego” means that everything is intimately connected to every-

Dr. Küng and Rev. Niwano during the dialogue that took place in Rissho Kosei-kai's Horin-kaku Guest Hall in Tokyo.

tity of all life is condensed in and symbolized by the precept against taking life.

Küng: Perhaps I need to mention that there are two other principles underlying the four, which are even more fundamental. One is the principle of benevolence or compassion. It is a very central concept in the Confucian ethic and also exists in the Buddhist ethic. The principle of benevolence is to treat every human being in a truly compassionate way, and that means to treat every human being—Japanese or foreigner, man or woman, rich or poor, young or old—in a truly humane way.

And the second basic principle that you can also find in the Buddhist tradition is the principle of reciprocity. It already existed in Confucianism, and is the golden rule, “Do not do to others what you do not want to have done

thing else in a web of interdependence. If we realize this, we will see that there is no distinction between “self” and “other,” and that the pain and joy of others are also our own.

To make this truth known to others is an act based upon true compassion. Thus, I am in full and total agreement with what Dr. Küng has expressed.

Harmony Transcending Nation, Culture, and Religion

Editor: You just spoke about the universal ethic of religions, but now we would like to ask you how we should deal with things related to the uniqueness of religions.

Küng: That's not so easy to discuss, but if you take the Buddhist eightfold path, you have a very specific approach to life and a very specific way to go, the path to a certain reality; but this is the same as saying that you are following

Christ in the specific way we have in Christianity. And even if you see the same moon once you reach the peak, the ways leading up the mountain are very different. But at the same time it is important that the ethical standards you have to follow on the way up the mountain are the same. So if you have, let us say, a school class or an international company in which you have people of different nations and religions, despite the specificity of their national and religious customs, they all have the same rules of behavior, the same values, and the same ethical standards. But very often people do not know it, children do not know it. And we all have to work together to make a tremendous effort so that in the schools they teach that everybody has the same ethical standards. And I think that already in kindergarten children should learn about the golden rule of reciprocity.

Niwano: I always envision a tripolar relationship of universality, specificity, and individuality. Universality is the Dharma, specificity is the Buddha, and individuality is the Sangha. In the case of Shakyamuni Buddha, and also in that of Jesus Christ, the place, the people, and the culture into which they were born had a specific effect upon their ideas. But what they were searching for was a universal law. If, with our individuality, we are not exposed to specificity, then we will never be able to understand universality. Through the teachings of the Buddha, the Japanese gained an understanding of universality; in the same way, through the teachings of Christ, Europeans have gained an understanding of universality. This tripolar model has become a standard for me, whenever I think of universality or specificity.

Küng: I think that the third point you are mentioning, individuality, is very important, because ultimately it is always the individual who has to go his own way and make a choice. If you have the Dharma as the general law, and if you have the Buddha or Christ as your guide, what is important, I think, is that everybody finds his or her own way, which is individual.

Editor: *Why do you think dialogue between religions is important today?*

Küng: I would say there is a very simple, a very elementary reason. If you have no dialogue, you will ultimately shoot at each other. Look at the Middle East, where they do not have dialogue, and shoot all the time at each other. Dialogue has many positive and practical implications. If you try to understand another person, you become richer yourself. It

is the same as learning another language. You become richer because you learn the other language and you learn about the other people.

Niwano: It is taught that it is religion that binds man to man, that binds man to God. Therefore, it is my belief that dialogue and cooperation among religions are themselves the true mission of religion.

In that sense, I am struck with the great importance of

Dr. Küng and Rev. Niwano in the Japanese garden in back of the Horin-kaku Guest Hall.

Dr. Küng's words: "There can be no peace among nations without peace among religions. And there can be no peace among religions without dialogue between religions." □

Note

* This poem was composed by Yoshida Toshimaro (1841–1864), a warrior of the Choshu clan in the late Edo period (1603–1868). It appeared in a letter to his fellow warrior, Kusaka Genzui.

Entrusting the Dharma to Us

by Gene Reeves

In chapter 22 of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni urges the many assembled bodhisattvas to spread the sutra with all their hearts and make it known far and wide.

Chapter 22 of the Lotus Sutra brings the main body of the sutra to a close. The long story—which begins in chapter 1 and includes the integration of many skillful means into the One Buddha Vehicle, the sudden appearance of the Stupa of Abundant Treasures Buddha and the assembling of buddhas from all over the universe in chapter 11, and the emergence of the great host of bodhisattvas from the earth in chapter 15—comes to an end with chapter 22. Chapters 23–28, along with chapter 12, which is a kind of interruption of that story, are regarded as a distinct group of chapters, almost as a kind of appendix, in terms of order of composition of the Lotus Sutra.

This does not mean, however, that the later chapters are

necessarily later in composition than those appearing earlier in the sutra. These Buddhist sutras from India may have existed for centuries as oral texts only, passed along from generation to generation by word of mouth. Since they can be understood to illustrate the bodhisattva tradition, the addition to the Lotus Sutra of these chapters following chapter 22 is completely natural. No doubt, many of them existed and circulated independently until incorporated into the Lotus Sutra.

The Story

The story in chapter 22 is very brief. Shakyamuni Buddha places his right hand on the heads of all the many assembled bodhisattvas three times and entrusts the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to them, urging them to spread it with all their hearts and make it known far and wide. He tells them that they should receive and embrace, read and recite, and proclaim the sutra, so that all living beings everywhere may hear and understand it. This is because the Buddha, the “great gift-giver” for all living beings, has great compassion, is not stingy or begrudging, has no fear, and gives to living beings Buddha-wisdom, Tathagata-wisdom, natural wisdom. The bodhisattvas respond by promising three times to do what they have been asked, and pleading with the Buddha not to worry about that. Then the Buddha tells all of the assembled buddhas, including Abundant Treasures Buddha in his stupa, to return in peace to where they had come from. With this, everyone in the assembly is filled with joy.

Placing of Hands

It is believed that in ancient India placing one’s hand on the head of another was a sign of trust. Clearly something

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like that is intended here. But perhaps something more is involved. Though not in this chapter, in various other places in the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha has said that he is the father of this world. Further, bodhisattvas are regarded as children of the Buddha. There is, in other words, a familial relation, a relation of affection between the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Here, the placing of his hand on the heads of bodhisattvas indicates that the relationship is not only one of trust in the formal sense, but displays a religious faith which goes beyond calculations of ability and such. Just as in early chapters of the sutra he has assured shravakas of becoming buddhas, here the Buddha assures bodhisattvas that they can do the job that needs to be done.

The bodhisattvas, in turn, assure the Buddha that they will indeed carry on his ministry of spreading the Dharma. In other words, the relationship of trust between the Buddha and the bodhisattvas is a mutual one, based on personal assurance. The Buddha assures the bodhisattvas that they can do what needs to be done and they assure him that they will do it.

Entrusting the Teaching

What is the job that needs to be done? There is both a general answer to this question and a more specific one. The more general answer is that the Dharma, the teaching of the Buddha, needs to be disseminated. So, especially with the Buddha no longer able to do so directly, bodhisattvas are responsible for teaching, and thus perpetuating, the Buddha-dharma. But the Dharma is not merely words in a book, or a set of doctrines that can be memorized and handed down to others. The Lotus Sutra is aimed at transforming lives for the better. It is concerned not only with teaching the Dharma in the ordinary sense; it is concerned with having the Dharma be embodied, having it be a central part of the lives of people. Early in this chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha says, "For incalculable hundreds of thousands of billions of eons, I have studied and practiced this rare Dharma. . . ." Notice that he says both "studied" and "practiced." Practicing the Dharma goes beyond studying it to embody it in one's life. Thus bodhisattvas have a responsibility not only of teaching the Dharma by words, but also by demonstrating and exemplifying it in their actions.

It is because of this role as exemplars of the Dharma that bodhisattvas, both mythical and human, can be models for us. Because they are said to have many marvelous powers, people may pray to a bodhisattva for relief from some kind of danger or suffering, but that is not the most useful way to understand the purpose of bodhisattvas. They have been entrusted by the Buddha to be exemplars of the Dharma who in their very being can inspire us to follow our own

bodhisattva ways. If various bodhisattvas have found skills and powers with which to help others, we too can develop skill in means of helping others.

The Dharma Is for All

The text says, "You should receive and embrace, read and recite, and proclaim [the Dharma], so that all living beings everywhere may hear and understand it. . . . The [Buddha] is the great gift-giver for all living beings."

Rissho Kosei-kai is a Japanese organization. It was founded in Japan by Japanese people and its membership today is overwhelmingly Japanese. Though often categorized as a "new religion," it is not, nor does it pretend to be, a new religion. It is a relatively new institutional expression of Buddhism, a very old religion that has had a wide variety of institutional expressions in various times and cultures. It has taken the Lotus Sutra as its basic Buddhist text.

While Rissho Kosei-kai is a Japanese organization, the Lotus Sutra is not a Japanese text, at least not *only* a Japanese text. It is a text originating in India some twenty-two centuries or more ago. A Sanskrit version, which itself would have been a translation or adaptation from some more common language or languages, was translated into Chinese several times during the first few centuries of the common era. One of those translations, that of Kumarajiva, became enormously popular and influential in Chinese culture and thence in all of East Asia, including Japan. And this Chinese version has now been translated into many European languages, several times into English, but also in recent years into French, Italian, German, Russian, and other languages.

While Kumarajiva's Chinese version has been adapted into Japanese, no one imagines that this Japanese version, or the Chinese version, or any other version is by itself "The Lotus Sutra." The precise meaning of the term "The Lotus Sutra" and its equivalents in other languages has to remain somewhat imprecise, as there is no one text which is "The Lotus Sutra," no one original from which others are derived. Even in the sutra itself, there is no consistently maintained distinction between the Lotus Sutra and the Buddha-dharma. In a sense, we can say that the Lotus Sutra understands itself to be the most inclusive and important expression of the teachings of the Buddha-dharma.

As the Lotus Sutra often praises itself and asserts its own excellence or superiority, it is very important to notice that in this chapter, which entrusts the teaching to bodhisattvas, the Buddha says that if there are people in the future who cannot have faith in or accept the Lotus Sutra, other profound teachings of the Buddha should be used in order to teach the Lotus Sutra. In other words, the teachings of the Lotus Sutra are not only in the text called "The Lotus

Sutra,” they are also to be found in all of the profound teachings of the Buddha found in numerous sutras. By clinging too strongly to the text and words that we call the Lotus Sutra, we may limit our ability to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the teachings that compose the “real” Lotus Sutra.

One of the things this means is that the Buddha-dharma is at once both cultural and acultural. That is, it can be found in many languages and cultures and in that sense is “beyond” cultures or acultural, but, at the same time, it is never found apart from particular languages and cultures and thus is always embedded in cultures. Though we may not know exactly what he and his assistants were translating from, Kumarajiva’s translation is a translation into Chinese in which the Lotus Sutra is embodied, for the most part, in Chinese terms and ways of thinking. Similarly, Japanized versions take on, to some degree, characteristics of Japanese language and culture. I have translated the Chinese version into English. In doing this, I know very well that a great deal is lost, but I also believe that it is possible that something is gained, for by being rendered in additional languages and cultural contexts, the acultural Lotus Sutra once again, to some extent, finds embodiment and life.

The Lotus Sutra is not, then, merely an Indian or Chinese or Japanese text, any more than Buddhism should be understood to be just an Indian or Chinese or Japanese religion. By entrusting the Dharma to bodhisattvas, who themselves are largely mythical and therefore acultural, the Buddha is indicating that the Buddha-dharma is good medicine for all people and should be made available to all.

This does not mean that everyone should become a Buddhist. For many people other religious traditions appear to be quite satisfactory. But the mission to spread the Dharma to all does imply that everyone should have an opportunity to hear the Buddha-dharma and decide for themselves whether it is suitable for them. This means that translations, even good translations, are not enough. For it to be effectively taught, the Dharma has to be embodied in the lives of contemporary people, bodhisattvas of today.

Bodhisattvas of today may or may not be Buddhist. It is entirely possible for one to embody the Lotus Sutra in one’s life without ever having heard of Buddhism or the Lotus Sutra. This is made evident in a recently revised and readily available book by Taigen Dan Leighton, called *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression*.

Though not the only way, reading, reciting, and writing the Lotus Sutra are sound practices for truly embracing the Buddha-dharma and integrating it into one’s life. Thus,

this chapter, which entrusts the care and propagation of the Dharma to all bodhisattvas, commissions all of us to spread the Lotus Sutra and its teachings beyond the sphere of East Asian culture and language.

This means, in effect, that anyone who loves the Lotus Sutra is obligated to share it with others. Just how this should be done will depend heavily on the abilities and locations, both social and geographical, of the person. But the point I want to stress here is that spreading the Dharma beyond oneself, and beyond one’s communities and country, is not just a kind of something extra to be added to one’s religious practice, something nice to do if one has time; it is an essential part of the practice of the Lotus Sutra. It is what those who have been enriched by the Lotus Sutra have been entrusted by the Buddha to do.

Be Generous in Teaching

The text says, “The [Buddha] is the great gift-giver for all living beings. You too should follow the teachings of the [Buddha] and not be stingy or begrudging.”

It is very common for people who are enthusiastic about something to want to protect it by preserving it just as it is and by taking pleasure in making it difficult for it to be understood or appreciated by the uninitiated. Being inflexible about how a text is to be translated and expressed, insisting, for example, on using unfamiliar Sanskrit terms or quaint English expressions, may make it very difficult for others to enter a particular circle of understanding and appropriation. In such ways we may be establishing an in-group/out-group situation in which we are on the inside, in some way perhaps protected from what is outside. Traditionally, secret doctrines or ceremonies were used in this way.

Perhaps this kind of group bonding through special, esoteric language is necessary to some degree. Certainly it is very common among religious groups. But when it means that the Lotus Sutra, which entrusts us to spread it everywhere, is not taught generously to others, we fail to fulfill the commission of the Buddha.

I believe that teaching generously should mean that we share the sutra in whatever ways are most appropriate to the intended audience, always, of course, within the real limits of our abilities. While it might be nice if everyone learned enough Chinese to be able to read Kumarajiva’s Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra, this is neither necessary nor necessarily desirable. It is good, I believe, that we have versions of the Lotus Sutra that make it more intelligible to Japanese people, and it is good that there are English versions that make it more available to English-speaking people. This is not merely a matter of translation

Details from the thirteenth-century picture scroll of the Lotus Sutra, depicting the scene of chapter 22. Colors on paper. Important Cultural Property. Kyoto National Museum.

into other languages; it is important that the sutra be rendered in ways that make it as understandable as possible.

This kind of generosity, a generosity in which one tries to understand and appreciate the linguistic and cultural situation of others, a generosity in which we do not insist that our own way of expressing something in the sutra is the only good way, this kind of generosity is what the sutra expects of those who are genuine followers of it.

If we do not approach teaching the sutra with such a generous attitude we will, I fear, fall into one more version

of what I call “merely formal Dharma” discussed in the previous segment of this series on stories in the Lotus Sutra, something that has also been called “fake Dharma,” “counterfeit Dharma,” “semblance Dharma” and the like. In other words, we will be going through the motions of teaching and practicing, but very few will be deeply moved by such teaching.

This kind of failure to be generous is largely unconscious, making it difficult, but not impossible, to detect and overcome. But another problem often stands in the

way of our being generous in teaching. Often we are all too conscious of it, making it difficult to overcome. I am speaking here of reticence or shyness in speaking and teaching.

Throughout the Lotus Sutra there are references to the eloquence of bodhisattvas. Already at the beginning of chapter 1 we are told that the eighty thousand bodhisattvas present had all “taught with delight and eloquence.” Later, in chapter 17, the Buddha says, “when I taught that the length of the [Buddha’s] life is very long . . . bodhisattva great-ones as numerous as the specks of dust in an entire world delighted in being eloquent and unhindered in speech.” Even the bodhisattva called “Never Disrespectful” because he always went around bowing to people and telling them that he would never disrespect them, is said to have “powers of joyful and eloquent speech.” Even the Dragon Princess, a young girl, is said to be eloquent in teaching the Dharma.

This emphasis on eloquence is simply another indication of the importance of the teaching role of bodhisattvas. Of course, not everyone who follows the Lotus Sutra will become truly eloquent, and certainly not automatically. But there is a strong suggestion that those who seek to spread the Dharma must strive to overcome reticence and shyness in order to be able to speak freely without being hindered by worries about embarrassing oneself. In many cases, this may require training and much practice, but it is an integral part of the bodhisattva path. Being shy should not be an excuse for leaving the teaching of the Dharma to others.

Buddha-wisdom

The Buddha, the text says, gives to living beings “Buddha-wisdom, Tathagata-wisdom, natural wisdom.” This phrase has sometimes been taken to refer to three different kinds of wisdom, but I think the three terms are intended to be equivalent, three different ways of saying “Buddha-wisdom.” The fact that “Tathagata,” often translated as “Thus Come One,” is simply another of the ten epithets of the Buddha, would indicate that there is no difference between Buddha-wisdom and Tathagata-wisdom, and the logic of the phrase would suggest that if there is no difference between these two, there is no difference among the three, they are just three ways of talking about the same thing.

If this is correct, it means that Buddha-wisdom, or at least the Buddha-wisdom given to human beings, is a kind of natural wisdom. Natural wisdom is a kind of inherent wisdom, a wisdom that is not given from outside but arises naturally. Thus, we are being told here that in teaching the Buddha-dharma we can rely on our own inherent wisdom. This is, of course, entirely consistent with the idea that we

all have the buddha-nature, the capacity to be a buddha for others.

Such wisdom should not be understood, as such terms as “inherent” might suggest, as independent of others. In the first place, it is not something we ourselves individually create; it is given to us by nature or the Buddha. It is a gift to us, something we have received. Second, just as having the buddha-nature does not mean that we are already fully buddhas, having natural wisdom does not mean that our wisdom cannot or should not be developed and enhanced by knowledge. What it does mean is that we have the natural capacity to do this, the capacity to become better informed, more knowledgeable, wiser in dealing with others.

Our Buddha-wisdom is like the inheritance of the poor son in the parable in chapter 4 of the Lotus Sutra and discussed here some time ago. Our inheritance is ours. Given to us at birth, it cannot be taken away from us. But it can be severely restricted in use or it can be expanded greatly through experience and education.

Buddhas Need Peace

It is very interesting, especially from the perspective of one raised in the West with notions of divine omnipotence, to see Shakyamuni Buddha here being urged by bodhisattvas not to worry and in turn telling the assembled buddhas that they should now go in peace.

Then Shakyamuni Buddha had all the buddhas embodying him, who had come from all directions, return to their own lands, saying: “Buddhas, go in peace.”

The Buddha, in other words, like any teacher, is anxious about whether his teaching has really been effective. Here he is reassured that the teaching that he has been doing and needs to continue will be continued by bodhisattvas. Just as the Buddha has assured many that they will become buddhas, here the Buddha is assured that the bodhisattvas will fulfill the commission given to them by the Buddha.

In turn, the Buddha can then tell the assembled buddhas to go in peace, that is, without worry as to whether what is needed will be done. There would be no point in telling the buddhas to go in peace unless there was some possibility that they would be anxious. But the earthly bodhisattvas have just promised to preach the Buddha-dharma. For that reason, all the buddhas can be put at ease.

This means, as we have said many times, buddhas depend on bodhisattvas to carry out their mission. Shakyamuni Buddha is not independently powerful. His power is embodied in the actions and lives of bodhisattvas. Shakyamuni Buddha could tell the other buddhas to go in peace because the Dharma had been entrusted to you! □

Fundamental Buddhism and the One-vehicle Teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the Soteriology of Rissho Kosei-kai

by Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya

The doctrine of the lay Buddhist group could be said to be a fusion of two distinct traditions that emerged during the course of Buddhism's development and expansion from India to other Asian cultures.

Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist movement of the Nichiren school of Japanese Buddhism and, as in all Buddhist groups of the Nichiren school, the Lotus Sutra forms the basis for its doctrine. Although Nichiren Buddhist groups are known for their exclusive faith in the Lotus Sutra, what is distinctive about the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai is that they combine the Lotus Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism with fundamental Buddhism. As discussed below, fundamental Buddhism (also referred to as

original Buddhism) is a term coined by Japanese Buddhist scholars to refer to the actual or original teachings of Buddhism, that is, those teachings that are believed to have been preached by Shakyamuni Buddha, as distinguished from their later interpretations by his disciples.

It could be said that the soteriology of Rissho Kosei-kai is a fusion of two distinct traditions in Buddhism that emerged during the course of development and expansion of Buddhism from India to other Asian cultures, that is, fundamental Buddhism, or the teachings of early Buddhism, and the Lotus Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism. Why did Rissho Kosei-kai need to include fundamental Buddhism in its teachings and how are these two distinct schools of Buddhist philosophy fused in the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai? From a reading of *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra* by Nikkyo Niwano (1906–1999), the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, it is evident that the inclusion of fundamental Buddhism has influenced Rissho Kosei-kai's interpretation of the Lotus Sutra, especially its emphasis on the *ichijo* (*ekayana*), or One-vehicle, teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Here I would like to discuss the role of fundamental Buddhism in the soteriology of Rissho Kosei-kai, and how it is combined with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the basic doctrine of this religious organization.

Fundamental Buddhism

Fundamental Buddhism comprises the teachings of Buddhism derived from Pali and Sanskrit canons that are recognized by Buddhist scholars as the oldest surviving written record of what the Buddha actually taught. The term

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fundamental Buddhism (*konpon bukkyo*) became widely known in 1910 when Masaharu Anesaki (1873–1949) published a book by the same name. In this book he refers to Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism as the branches or flowers of Buddhist tradition and emphasizes the need to look for the fundamental or original form of Buddhism through the study of Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts. The research on fundamental Buddhism is a product of modern scholarship in Buddhist studies that was initiated by the exposure of Japanese Buddhist scholars of the Meiji era (1868–1912) to research on Buddhism in the West, which was based on the study of Pali and Sanskrit canons. This awareness of Buddhist traditions other than those of Chinese origin led to the modern scientific study of Buddhism in Japan that used new historical sources and comparative research methods. In their research on fundamental or original Buddhism, Japanese Buddhist scholars such as Masaharu Anesaki, Hajime Nakamura, and others have tried to trace back to the pristine state of Buddhism as it was believed to have existed in ancient India around the time of Gautama Buddha.

Why did Rissho Kosei-kai need to include fundamental Buddhism in its teachings? Rissho Kosei-kai, a lay Buddhist new religion, was founded in 1938 in Tokyo by Nikkyo Niwano and Myoko Naganuma (1889–1957) by seceding from another new religion called Reiyukai of Nichiren Buddhism. Like many other new religions of Japan, Rissho

Kosei-kai, too, had phenomenal growth in the postwar period, but this movement faced a major crisis in 1956, when a leading Japanese newspaper, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, carried out a prolonged attack on the financial dealings and proselytization activities (particularly the shamanistic practices of Myoko Naganuma) of this religious organization. After Naganuma's death and also in order to recover from media criticism of its proselytization activities, it was essential for Rissho Kosei-kai to project itself as a modern religion. It did so by incorporating fundamental Buddhism into its doctrine, which had emerged from a modern and scientific understanding of Buddhism by Japanese scholars. Rissho Kosei-kai invited Fumio Masutani, a student of Anesaki, to lecture on fundamental Buddhism in its seminary. Masutani's lectures on the assimilation of fundamental Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism were of relevance to Rissho Kosei-kai as it was trying to formulate a doctrine based on the assimilation of the teachings of fundamental Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra.

In the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Law of the Twelve Causes [the doctrine of the Twelve-linked Chain of Dependent Origination], the Six Perfections, the Three Seals of the Law, and so forth are preached as the teachings of fundamental Buddhism. Fundamental Buddhism elucidates the truth about human existence; that is, it explains the causes of human suffering and finally reveals the path for saving sen-

A hoza session held at a newly-completed training hall at Rissho Kosei-kai's Tokyo headquarters. Photograph taken in 1951.

Founder Nikkyo Niwano lecturing on the doctrines of fundamental Buddhism for local branch members in 1962.

tient beings from worldly sufferings. According to Niwano, fundamental Buddhism is the means through which we can understand the truth of the various laws/teachings of Buddhism as preached by Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha presented his various teachings according to the level and capacity of his disciples. "For those who sought to be *sravakas*, he preached the Law of the Four Noble Truths for the overcoming of birth, old age, disease, and death, and finally leading to nirvana; for those who sought to be *pratyekabuddhas*, he preached the Law of the Twelve Causes; for the bodhisattvas, he preached the Six Perfections to cause them to attain Perfect Enlightenment and to achieve perfect knowledge."¹ In *Buddhism for Today*, Niwano states that "The doctrines of the Four Noble Truths and the Six Perfections, or *Paramitas*, teach us how we can fundamentally solve the problem of the suffering and distress that we are faced with in our daily lives and how we can obtain a mental state of peace and quietude."² Niwano regarded fundamental Buddhism as not only the core of the Buddha's teachings, but also guidelines for our daily lives. For this reason, he has given an easy-to-understand and detailed explanation of the teachings of fundamental Buddhism in the introductory chapters of *Buddhism for Today*.

The One Vehicle (*Ichijo*) of the Lotus Sutra

The One Vehicle refers to the teachings that enable every sentient being to attain buddhahood. The One Buddha Vehicle is contrasted with the *sravaka* and *pratyekabuddha*

vehicles, as well as with the bodhisattva vehicle. The teachings of the One Vehicle (*ekayana*) do not make a distinction among these three vehicles and is seen as an attempt to go beyond the soteriological differences found in various Buddhist sutras. Although many sutras of Mahayana Buddhism refer to the One-vehicle ideal, it is most emphatically stressed in the Lotus Sutra. The One-vehicle teachings of the Lotus Sutra are revealed in chapter 2, "Skillful Means" or "Tactfulness" (*Hoben-pon*).

In the buddha-lands of the universe
There is only the One-vehicle Law,
Neither a second nor a third,
Except the tactful teachings of the Buddha.
But by provisional expressions
He has led all living creatures,
Revealing the Buddha-wisdom.
In the appearing of buddhas in the world
Only this One [Vehicle] is the real fact,
For the other two [vehicles] are not the true.
They never by a smaller vehicle
Save all living creatures.
The Buddha himself abides in the Great-vehicle,
In accordance with the Law he has attained,
Enriched with powers of meditation and wisdom,
And by it he saves all creatures.
(*The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, The Sutra of the Lotus Flower
of the Wonderful Law, chapter 2, "Tactfulness")³

U.S. members officiating as leaders in chanting the Lotus Sutra.

The One-vehicle ideal of the Lotus Sutra aims to bring all sentient beings to the same ultimate enlightenment as that of the Buddha and states that the various teachings provided in other sutras are provisional (*hoben*). But, since all the sutras came out of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion, and all were the results of his desire to communicate the truth of his enlightenment, the fundamental idea is one and the same despite their apparent differences. That is, the One-vehicle teachings of the Lotus Sutra reveal the *saddharma*, or the fundamental unifying truth, of the universe. The idea that all teachings are the manifestation of one universal truth indicates the universalistic aspect in the teachings of the One Vehicle of the Lotus Sutra which, as discussed below, provides Rissho Kosei-kai with a universalistic ethic for its social engagements.

The basic theme of the *Hoben-pon* is that the "skillful means of three vehicles" lead to the truth of One Vehicle; that is, the significance or the utility of *hoben* (*upaya*) is that it is an expedient way of leading sentient beings to the truth. In 1957, after the death of Naganuma, Niwano declared the end of the "Age of Skillful Teachings" (*Hoben no jidai*) and beginning of a new era of "Manifestation of the Truth" (*Shinjitsu kengen*). Subsequently, Rissho Kosei-kai undertook doctrinal rationalization—shamanistic practices were eliminated and the Lotus Sutra was declared as the sole basis of its missionary activities.

It is this function of *hoben*, or revealing the truth or leading the way to the truth, that was emphasized by Niwano: "Religious practice necessitates various forms that are best

characterized as the power of skillful means. . . . Skillful means are ultimately a way to bring people closer to the other shore of enlightenment. We must constantly consider, though, whether through their use we can arouse in people a desire to come closer to the teachings of Buddhism, or whether they can be instrumental in revealing to them the truth of their buddha-nature. The original meaning of skillful means is lost if they are not a device to guide people toward the true way of life they should be leading. If they do not do this, they are not truly skillful means." According to Niwano, chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra could as well be called "Truth." "For one of the most significant chapters of the Lotus Sutra to be given the title of 'Tactfulness' shows how important skillful means are. If we do not use skillful means, people will not be able to approach the truth, or even to know it. It is very difficult to comprehend the truth unless it is done through parables and skillful means."⁴ It is this interpretation of the Lotus Sutra, which emphasizes the necessity of skillful means for comprehending the truth, that is the basis for combining One-vehicle teachings and fundamental Buddhism in the doctrines of Rissho Kosei-kai. Moreover, Niwano regarded skillful means as wisdom derived from the understanding of human suffering or the human condition and also as practical means that relieve those who are suffering. "In other words, skillful means are what put wisdom into effect; wisdom and skillful means are not two separate things."⁵ As stated above, the teachings of fundamental Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Law

of the Twelve Causes, and so forth are based on a true understanding of human existence; they explain the causes of human suffering and then reveal the path to salvation from worldly sufferings.

Combination of Fundamental Buddhism and the One-vehicle Teachings of the Lotus Sutra

The emphasis on fundamental Buddhism is also evident from the fact that the standing statue of the Eternal Original Buddha Shakyamuni (*Kuon Honbutsu Shakuson*), rather than the mandala of the Nichiren sect, is chosen as the object of worship (*go-honzon*) by Rissho Kosei-kai. This object of worship was chosen because of its connection to fundamental Buddhism. The formal honorific title of this object of worship is the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Great Benevolent Teacher, the World-honored One (*Kuon-jitsujo Daion-kyoshu Shakamuni-seson*). The phrase *Kuon-jitsujo* occurs in the Lotus Sutra and indicates that the Buddha was actually enlightened countless eons ago, so that the Buddha Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment at Bodhgaya, is merely a provisional manifestation of the Buddha. This eternal life span of Shakyamuni Buddha is revealed in chapter 16, "Revelation of the Eternal Life of the Tathagata" of the Lotus Sutra. Niwano explains the character of the Original Buddha Shakyamuni as: "The Original Buddha Shakyamuni is the constant and imperishable Buddha of immeasurably long life who has attained enlightenment from eternity and is nothing but the universal great life or great truth which lives in all things in the universe and makes all things alive. Lord Shakyamuni, who was born as a man in this actual *saha*-world, renounced the world, attained buddhahood, taught all creatures the eternal truth, and before long entered nirvana, is the manifestation of the Original Buddha in the world of humanity. In other words, the entity of the Original Buddha Shakyamuni is the Buddha as the great life and the great truth of the universe (*dharma-kaya*, *hosshin*, or Law-body), the Buddha who has a personality of eternal and imperishable life (*sambhoga-kaya*, *hojin*, or bliss-body), and the Buddha who appeared in this actual *saha*-world to save its creatures (*nirmana-kaya*, *ojin*, or historical-body)."⁶ According to the theories of Buddha-body, the *dharma-kaya* (Law-body), *sambhoga-kaya* (bliss-body), and *nirmana-kaya* (historical-body) are the three manifestations of the Buddha. Niwano states that the Eternal Original Buddha Shakyamuni was chosen as the object of worship because it embodies the "three-bodies-in-one." "This is not merely an abstract idea or ideal, but a historical reality which has appeared in the Teacher and Lord Shakyamuni."⁷ In other words, the Teacher and Lord Shakyamuni is made the center of the object of worship of Rissho Kosei-kai.

The Eternal Original Buddha Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra are regarded as one in substance; that is, the Original Buddha Shakyamuni is seen as a personification of the truth revealed in the Lotus Sutra. As Niwano says, "When called the Original Buddha, it means the Original Buddha based upon the Wonderful Law or the personal embodiment of the truth, and when called the Wonderful Law, it means the Wonderful Law based upon the Original Buddha or the truth embodied in the Original Buddha."⁸ By citing the parable of the good doctor and his sick children from the Lotus Sutra, Niwano says that the Original Buddha is compared to a good doctor, the Wonderful Law (Lotus Sutra) to a good remedy, and the sick children to sentient beings. The relationship between the Original Buddha; the Lotus Sutra, and sentient beings is explained thus: "When we worship the Original Buddha Shakyamuni and believe and understand, receive and hold, and practice the Wonderful Law or the teaching of the Original Buddha, we, all the creatures, return to our right mind and are saved and protected."⁹

This also shows how the inclusion of fundamental Buddhism has influenced Rissho Kosei-kai's understanding of the Lotus Sutra. The Original Buddha Shakyamuni who appears in the Lotus Sutra represents the eternal, trans-historical, and omnipresent Buddha, and is seen as the great life-force of the universe. Rissho Kosei-kai, while emphasizing the eternal and universal aspects of the Original Buddha, also reveres him as the Teacher and Savior who appeared in this world to preach the Lotus Sutra and save all sentient beings. That is, the Original Buddha Shakyamuni is the object of worship not only for his eternity and universality but also for his appearance as the historical Buddha.

The *hoza* counseling sessions of Rissho Kosei-kai exemplify the fusion of fundamental Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra in the religious practices of this religious organization. *Hoza* in Rissho Kosei-kai is like a group counseling meeting where people present their daily life problems and all the members try to find solutions to the problem by applying the principles of the Four Noble Truths and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The Four Noble Truths are the Truth of Suffering (*kutai*), the Truth of Cause (*jittai*), the Truth of Extinction (*mettai*), and the Truth of the Path (*dotai*). Presenting one's problems in *hoza*, or recognizing the reality of suffering, is *kutai*. Reflecting and investigating the causes of the problem are *jittai*. Suggesting ways to achieve relief from sufferings is *dotai*, and the state of tranquillity or relief from sufferings is *mettai*. At the end of the *hoza* meeting, the leader of the group winds up the discussion by citing the Lotus Sutra or teachings of the founder or the president. The *hoza* session demonstrates how the

two schools of Buddhist thought are combined and practiced in Rissho Kosei-kai. *Hoza* uses the teachings of fundamental Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, to explicate the problems, whereas the solutions or the concluding statements of a *hoza* meeting are based on the Lotus Sutra.

The Soteriology and Social Engagements of Rissho Kosei-kai

Rissho Kosei-kai is well known for its wide range of social engagements, such as interreligious dialogue, international peace movements, overseas relief activities, and so forth. Rissho Kosei-kai's involvement in interreligious cooperation started in 1951, when it joined hands with other new religions of Japan to form the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (Shinshuren). Rissho Kosei-kai is one of the founding members of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), and is also a leading member of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). In 1969 Rissho Kosei-kai launched a community-based social movement called the Brighter Society Movement. In addition to sponsoring such large-scale movements, it is also involved in international relief activities, such as building shelters for Indochinese refugees in Japan, the Campaign for Sharing Blankets with People in Africa (sending blankets to drought-stricken African countries), financial and medical assistance at the time of natural calamities, and so forth. The Donate-a-Meal Campaign is Rissho Kosei-kai's major fund-raising movement, and is mainly used to support its international relief activities.

The social engagements of Rissho Kosei-kai are marked by a spirit of universalism, cooperation, and tolerance for religious, cultural, or racial diversities. As is evident from the scale of its social activities, its purpose is to save not only the people of its own religious community, but also the people of the entire nation and the world. (This universalism is also evident from the members' vow of Rissho Kosei-kai, which states, "And we pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way to bring peace to our families, communities, and countries and to the world.") Moreover, Rissho Kosei-kai's social activities, whether in interreligious dialogue or international peace movements, are characterized by networking and cooperation with various other religious and nonreligious organizations. For instance, the objective of the Brighter Society Movement, as the name suggests, is to create a brighter community life based on the spirit of cooperation, mutual assistance, and community service by the members of the community. Niwano had proposed this movement in response to the growing materialism and spiritual impoverishment of modern man. This movement takes up social issues that are of common con-

cern to the community, and, through the means of finding solutions to these common problems, it strives to transcend the egoistic individualism and social divisions of contemporary society, thus promoting solidarity, cooperation, and goodwill among community members. This movement promotes its activities by networking with individuals and groups of diverse social, cultural, and political affiliations.¹⁰

The soteriology of Rissho Kosei-kai, based on the combination of fundamental Buddhism and the One-vehicle teachings of the Lotus Sutra, serves as the ethical or ideological basis for its social actions. The "one" of the One Vehicle has two aspects—one is universalism, and the other is egalitarianism. The idea that all teachings are manifestations of one universal truth indicates the universalistic aspect in the Lotus Sutra teachings of the One Vehicle. The emphasis that all people can achieve salvation indicates the idea of egalitarianism in this teaching. While the One Vehicle of the Lotus Sutra emphasizes that all teachings are manifestations of one universal truth, fundamental Buddhism refers to the original teachings of Buddhism before the emergence of Mahayana and Theravada schools of Buddhism. The fundamental or original teachings of Buddhism as exemplified by fundamental Buddhism and the unity of teachings as emphasized by the concept of the One Vehicle provide Rissho Kosei-kai with a universal ethic. This universal ethic is the guiding principle for its engagement in social activities, peace movements, interreligious dialogue, and so forth.

Like *hoza*, which entails concerned participation in the problems of other people, the Brighter Society Movement and the Donate-a-Meal Campaign are activities initiated by Rissho Kosei-kai for alleviating the suffering of other people, even extending to those who belong to other religions and are from other countries. These social engagements are inspired by the ideal of the One Vehicle and the Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, who preaches the unity of all teachings, the equality of all beings, and the eternity of life. This generates social ethics such as humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and respect for human life, which serve as the ideological basis for social action by this religious organization.

Rissho Kosei-kai's participation in international peace movements and interreligious cooperation is based on the idea that all religions are true teachings, and hence that dialogue is possible between people of different religious affiliations. Niwano has said, "The Lotus Sutra is the basic doctrine of Rissho Kosei-kai, and therefore we regard its teachings as supreme. However, this does not mean that we should look down upon or despise other teachings. The essence of all teachings is one: that all sutras contain the truth preached by the Buddha is the standpoint of the

ethic and the way it engages in social activities, by networking and cooperating with individuals and groups of diverse religious, social, and political affiliations, is inspired by this combination of fundamental Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra teachings of the One Vehicle.

It could be said that Rissho Kosei-kai's interpretation of traditional Buddhist teachings and the combination of different schools of Buddhism in its teachings has not only provided this religious organization with a unique doctrine of its own, but has also inspired social activism, thus shaping the character of Rissho Kosei-kai as a socially engaged Buddhist organization. □

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Notes

1. Nikkyo Niwano, *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 25–26.
2. *Ibid.* p. 26.
3. *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*. Trans. Bunno Kato, et al. (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1975), p. 64.
4. Nikkyo Niwano, "Making Our Deeds Agree with Our Words," *DHARMA WORLD*, Vol. 31 (January/February 2004), p. 15.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Nikkyo Niwano, *Honzon: The Object of Worship of Rissho Kosei-kai* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 52–53.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
10. Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya, "The Brighter Society Movement of Rissho Kosei-kai: A New Application of the Bodhisattva Way." *Asian Cultural Studies*, No. 27.
11. *Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu 3* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1980), p. 115.

Rissho Kosei-kai volunteers staying with Filipino villagers to jointly acquire skills for village development, such as the technique for digging wells.

Lotus Sutra. If one understands the Lotus Sutra well, then one is convinced that not just Buddhism but the essence of all religions is one."¹¹

Conclusion

The One-vehicle concept of the Lotus Sutra means that the various teachings of the Buddha are provisional or expedient means to reveal the truth. In other words, provisional teachings can lead to the truth or essence of the Buddha's teachings. In the faith and practices of Rissho Kosei-kai, the Lotus Sutra is the ideological basis of its teachings and fundamental Buddhism is seen as the means with which to grasp the truth that is revealed in the Lotus Sutra, and also to put its teachings into practice, that is, to implement the teachings in daily life and in social activities. The idea of the One Vehicle also implies a unity of the various teachings and philosophical traditions of Buddhism. This has made it possible to combine the teachings of fundamental Buddhism with those of the Lotus Sutra in the doctrine of Rissho Kosei-kai. Rissho Kosei-kai's universalistic social

The Seeds of Thanksgiving

This article is based upon a testimonial speech given by, and an interview held with, Mr. Hiromasa Igarashi, a man who discovered the seeds of thanksgiving by watching people find happiness through faith.

Hiromasa Igarashi has been a bus driver for three years now. He's painfully shy, yet a real doer at the same time. It was Igarashi, after all, who was the first to greet every passenger with a smile. Now his fellow bus drivers all do the same, but it was Igarashi who started the practice. Driving a bus seems the perfect vocation for Igarashi, but he suffered through a lot of anger, frustration, and uncertainty before he discovered his calling.

In June 2001, Igarashi had been laid off by the construction-materials company he had worked at for 25 years. In a move to downsize its operations, the company had closed one of its plants, firing nearly 100 workers in the process. There had been rumors some six months earlier that the plant would close, and in April everyone was notified in

writing that they would be out of a job. Igarashi was one of the plant employees who was let go.

"I thought I had steeled myself for this, but when I actually got my slip of paper it was hard to accept the reality."

Igarashi had warned his wife, Aiko, of what was to come. Perhaps because he had already prepared her for the bad news, she simply shrugged her shoulders when he got his official notice. "Well, there's nothing to be done about it," she said.

Their oldest daughter, Yuka, was still in her second year of high school and their second daughter, Maya, in her third year of junior high. Igarashi needed to find a new job quickly. But that was easier said than done for a man well into his forties. As he was turned down for one job after another, Igarashi felt as though he was being swallowed up in a dark abyss.

It was around this time that Kimiko Itagaki, chapter leader of the local Rissho Kosei-kai branch, invited Igarashi to the branch. There he met with Rev. Takashi Inageda, the branch head, who already knew of Igarashi's plight. "Before you start a new job, try coming to the branch every day for the next month," Rev. Inageda suggested. It was at this point that Igarashi's life really began to change.

"My parents had been Rissho Kosei-kai members and up until that time I had undertaken my duties as a member more out of a sense of obligation than anything else. I didn't really believe that faith could make a person happy. But going to the branch every day gave me something to cling to. It was a relief to have a 'job' to report to every day. I found the exercise very comforting."

The day after his talk with Rev. Inageda, Igarashi began his daily commute to the branch, taking a homemade lunch with him each time. Every day began at nine with sutra chanting and a *hoza* session. In the afternoon, Igarashi joined the branch leaders as they made their dissemination

Hiromasa Igarashi is a member of the Tsuruoka Branch of Rissho Kosei-kai in Yamagata Prefecture.

Mr. Igarashi, in the driver's seat, greets a customer who is boarding the bus.

rounds. Everything was refreshingly new. More than anything, Igarashi was surprised by the frequency with which people expressed their thanks and appreciation in the *hoza* sessions.

In the sessions, Igarashi listened to people relate their troubles and heard how they sought solace in the Buddha's teachings. He watched as they put the Buddha's teachings into practice and supported each other in overcoming their various ills. The process of salvation was laid bare for all to see. Over and over again, Igarashi witnessed people finding happiness through faith and something began to change within his own heart.

"There's a woman, well into her eighties, who finds great pleasure in the *hoza* sessions and comes very regularly. At first, I couldn't understand what attracted her so, but as I sat in on one *hoza* session after another, I found myself offering sincere congratulations to those who had been saved by the teaching. At the same time, I could feel my own courage coming to the fore. I was very much moved by the story of a woman in her forties who spoke cheerfully of her long battle with cancer and how she had learned to live with her disease. I soon realized that I was not the only one who was suffering. If I could learn to trust in the Buddha as these people did, I should be able to find the key to happiness that must surely be hidden within my own troubles. After all, the Buddha was always working to show us the Way."

Igarashi's daily commute to the local branch continued

for a month and a half. He began looking for work again in earnest, this time confident that the Buddha would lead him to a job, and he continued to participate in the *hoza* sessions whenever he could.

With Sincere Gratitude

In October, four months after Igarashi had lost his job, he signed up for driving lessons to get a bus driver's license. Igarashi had been inspired by someone's comment at one of the *hoza* sessions that securing such a driver's license might help him to find a good job. "I enjoyed driving, but it had never occurred to me to try to get a large-vehicle license. I shall be eternally grateful for that chance comment."

Nearly two months later, at the end of the year, Igarashi had his license in hand. In February of the new year, he learned that a bus company was advertising for drivers and he went to take their screening test. He passed the test and after a training period began a new career as a bus driver.

Fresh on the job, Igarashi was taken aback by the bad manners of the high-school students he encountered on his route. He passed by a number of high schools and his bus was filled every morning and evening by high-school students who talked in loud voices, chatted on their mobile phones, and even burst into song without a thought for the other passengers on the bus. When someone complained, they would quiet down for a few minutes, but very quickly the bus would return to its usual chaotic state. All of the

bus drivers were annoyed by the students. It wasn't long before Igarashi, too, found himself increasingly angry at the students. Somewhere along the way he forgot his initial joy at once again having a steady job.

"They're passengers, so you don't dare get mad at them, but you can't really hide your feelings. You get prickly with your words. I knew I should restrain myself, but the anger would just well up inside. It was hard to keep it down."

One day, Igarashi learned that most of the high-school students were using one-year bus passes. Even with a student discount, a year's commuting pass could cost quite a bit of money.

"It suddenly occurred to me: I can work because the passengers need me. Every single person who gets on my bus is important. I had been on the verge of forgetting a very simple truth."

Igarashi recalled the many words of thanks and appreciation that he had heard in the *hoza* sessions. He thought hard about how he might express his thanks and appreciation to his passengers. He decided he would welcome each person who boarded the bus with a smile and when passengers disembarked, he would send them off with a hearty "Thank you."

The very next day, Igarashi set about putting his new plan into practice. But he had trouble getting the words out at first. No one could hear him because of the noise the students were always making. This situation continued for two whole months. One day, however, the students boarding the bus began to respond to his "Good morning" with a "Good morning" of their own. This was unexpected and wonderful. It had not occurred to Igarashi that anyone would respond. His voice rang with his new-found pleasure.

Soon Igarashi and his passengers were exchanging daily greetings as a matter of course, and gradually Igarashi realized that the students were not as rowdy as they had been before. One day, a middle-aged couple on their way to climb Mount Gassan boarded the bus along with the usual group of students. They watched as Igarashi and the students exchanged their usual greetings. "How wonderful. The local students are certainly well-mannered," one of the mountain-climbers commented.

Igarashi was reminded of one of the lessons he had learned in a *hoza* session: "Change yourself and those around you will change, too." "I realized at that moment," he now recalls, "that the Buddha was right, and that all I had to do was to put his teachings into practice."

This past March, Igarashi was given a chance to talk about his experience of being laid off and what he went through before and after he found his new job. But as he began putting his thoughts down on paper, Igarashi decided that was not enough. There was something else he wanted

Mr. Igarashi chats with Miho in a park near their home.

to talk about and that was about his stepfather. Igarashi had been only five years old when his father died in a car accident. His mother, Kazumi, later remarried, and it was his stepfather, Shoji, who supported the family thereafter. Now Shoji was 74 years old, and Igarashi realized that he had never really thanked his stepfather for all he had done. They had never really felt comfortable with each other and remained distant. "If I'm going to be talking to others, I want to first tell my stepfather how much I appreciate what he did for the family."

One evening, Igarashi sat down before his stepfather. "Thank you for taking care of me all these years. I am truly grateful. Please, let me give you a massage to show my appreciation." Without waiting for his stepfather to respond, Igarashi quickly moved behind him and began to massage his shoulders and arms. Shoji remained silent.

And then, there is another person Igarashi wanted to give thanks to: his third daughter, 16-year-old Miho. It is always Miho who steps in to lighten everyone's spirits when there is a family spat. Miho is mentally disadvantaged, but her smile soothes the whole family. "You know, it just may be Miho who keeps us united as a family. I can see the Buddha in every encounter and I am rediscovering how very grateful I am to all kinds of people. Thank goodness I was laid off!"

The seeds of thanksgiving can be found anywhere, if we will only look for them. Igarashi has discovered that if you plant them and cultivate them, they will bear amazing fruit. □

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 10 A Teacher of the Law

(4)

This is the eighty-fifth installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.

TEXT If they have not heard, nor understood, nor been able to observe this Law Flower Sutra, you may know that they are still far from Perfect Enlightenment. If they hear, understand, ponder, and observe it, you may assuredly know that they are near Perfect Enlightenment. Wherefore? [Because] the Perfect Enlightenment of every bodhisattva all belongs to this sutra.

COMMENTARY *Ponder.* It is an important part of religious practice that we do not just passively listen to and learn the teaching but go deeply into it and consider it carefully.

• *Observe.* In the Chinese text, “observe” is *hsiu-hsi*. *Hsi* means to study repeatedly, and *hsiu* signifies to embody in one’s behavior. It is not enough just to hear and understand. It is the same with all forms of learning, but particularly so with religious teaching, that a superficial understanding will not result in the power to save oneself, others, or the world. What is necessary is to study the teaching over and over again, to make it one’s own. This is the meaning of “observe.” Please refer to the March/April 2005 issue of DHARMA WORLD for a detailed explanation of “listening” (study), “thought” (meditation), and “discipline” (practice).

• *Belongs to this sutra.* That is, the Buddha’s enlightenment is completely expounded and elucidated in this sutra.

TEXT This sutra brings out the fuller meaning of the tactful or partial method in order to reveal the real truth. The [treasury] of this Law Flower Sutra is so deep and strong, so hidden and far away that no human being has been able to reach it. Now the Buddha has revealed it for instructing and perfecting bodhisattvas.

COMMENTARY This passage is extremely important.

• *Brings out the fuller meaning of the tactful or partial method in order to reveal the real truth.* All the teachings of the

Buddha lead people to the Buddha’s enlightenment, but because each person has a different capacity, those teachings were taught using a variety of methods appropriate to each hearer’s understanding. They were the teachings of the “tactful method,” or “skillful means.” As long as such teachings were not revealed to be skillful means, people were only able to attain the deliverance most appropriate to their own circumstances, desires, and capacity, not yet knowing that these teachings were connected to the highest truth. That is, the gate of skillful means remained closed. When, however, that gate was opened and the ultimate aspect of the inmost truth, which had been hidden in the teachings preached so far, was revealed, people immediately awoke. “Look inside,” says the Buddha, “the truth underlying what has been taught so far lies within.” This is the meaning of “brings out the fuller meaning of the tactful or partial method in order to reveal the real truth.”

The Lotus Sutra has often been called the teaching that “opens the three vehicles and reveals the One Vehicle.” As is stated clearly here, it is the teaching that opens the gate of the three vehicles as skillful means and reveals the One Buddha Vehicle, which is the ultimate truth hidden within the three. This revelation was a shock to those who had hitherto believed that one or another of the three vehicles was the only teaching. They found it difficult to believe and harbored misgivings. Thus the Buddha went on to state the truth, saying, “The [treasury] of this Law Flower Sutra is so deep and strong, so hidden and far away that no human being has been able to reach it.”

• *The [treasury].* “Treasury” means the place within which all the teachings are stored, locked away so securely that they are hardly ever revealed.

• *Deep and strong.* “Deep” can mean “exceedingly” or “exhaustively” in Chinese. “Deep and strong” means that the gate of the Dharma is very stiff and difficult to open. That is,

the gate of this teaching, being so difficult to understand, cannot be opened by ordinary human wisdom.

- *Hidden and far away.* “Hidden” suggests being subtle, indistinct, and difficult to grasp. “Far away” here means deep and profound, not easy to reach.

- *No human being has been able to reach it.* This means that the profound depths, or the secrets, of the teaching cannot be reached by ordinary knowledge or means. Any person who can discern the real aspect of all things and see the buddha-nature in all people is able to reach the treasury. It was to help all people do so that the teaching of the Lotus Sutra was expounded.

- *Now the Buddha has revealed it for instructing and perfecting bodhisattvas.* The Buddha has revealed in an easy-to-understand way the teaching that instructs bodhisattvas and causes them to perfect the Buddha’s enlightenment.

TEXT Medicine King! If any bodhisattva, on hearing this sutra, is startled, doubts, and fears, you may know that this is a bodhisattva neophyte.

COMMENTARY *A bodhisattva neophyte.* This is a bodhisattva who has only newly aroused the aspiration for supreme enlightenment, a bodhisattva beginner. Perhaps everyone has experienced similar emotions. Whenever we set out to learn something, we are first taught to aim for the ideal, and when we find the way difficult, we become apprehensive. When those who have just begun learning the violin hear a piece like Pablo de Sarasate’s “Zigeunerweisen,” they cannot help feeling pessimistic about their own ability. Nevertheless, once the decision to learn has been made, such anxiety must be set aside, so that with careful study steady progress is made and difficult pieces can be mastered sooner or later. Practicing the Buddha Way is exactly the same. Bodhisattvas who have just resolved on their course will inevitably be startled and falter if hearing suddenly about the highest state of enlightenment. But as long as they do not turn back but continue to progress toward the goal, they will become bodhisattvas worthy of the name.

TEXT If any shravaka, on hearing this sutra, is startled, doubts, and fears, you may know him for an arrogant person.

COMMENTARY A shravaka means here a person who has attained enlightenment through hearing the small-vehicle teachings and has reached personal peace of mind through having removed the defilements. If such persons hear the teaching that it is possible for even them to attain buddhahood, they will be startled, doubtful, and hesitant to be-

lieve that such a thing is possible. To think in this way, the sutra says, is the mark of those who consider themselves to be more worthy or virtuous than they actually are. Here, “arrogant” signifies considering oneself to have attained true enlightenment when in truth one has not, or being satisfied with an inferior form of enlightenment when aware that a higher enlightenment exists, being satisfied with partial success. Both attitudes are formidable enemies blocking the accomplishment of the Buddha Way. Such a state of mind hinders not only the Buddha Way but also great success in any other field of endeavor. That is why the phrase “an arrogant person” is used in the text. In all things, to advance aiming at perfection is to live a truly human life; this is the truly worthwhile life we could have. Let us help one another nurture such strength of mind.

TEXT Medicine King! If there be any good son or good daughter who after the extinction of the Tathagata desires to preach this Law Flower Sutra to the four groups, how should he preach it? That good son or good daughter, entering into the abode of the Tathagata, wearing the robe of the Tathagata, and sitting on the throne of the Tathagata, should then widely proclaim this sutra to the four groups [of hearers]. The abode of the Tathagata is the great compassionate heart toward all living beings; the robe of the Tathagata is the gentle and forbearing heart; the throne of the Tathagata is the emptiness of all laws. Established in these, then with unflagging mind to bodhisattvas and the four groups [of hearers] he will preach this Law Flower Sutra.

COMMENTARY This passage is the most important in the chapter, setting out three fundamental attitudes that the believer of later times who preaches the Lotus Sutra must possess. Those attitudes are called “the three rules of the abode, the robe, and the throne [of the Tathagata].” “Rules” here means the correct path, standards, or norms.

(1) Entering into the abode of the Tathagata: A teacher of the Law of later times must first enter the room of the Buddha and there preach the Dharma. The Buddha’s abode is “the great compassionate heart toward all living beings.” The Buddha’s abode (the great compassionate heart) is infinitely vast, and the Buddha invites all living beings into his abode so that they may find liberation within. When we expound the Dharma to others, we must do so with such a great compassionate heart. Whether our hearers are good, evil, uninterested in the teaching, or argumentative, we must treat them in exactly the same way, on the basis of a “great compassionate heart.” What exactly is this compassionate heart? Buddhism is said to be a teaching comprising wisdom and compassion, and it is indeed erected on

those two pillars. I would like to take this opportunity to explain the meaning of compassion more fully.

Compassion is generally interpreted as affection, love, and sympathy toward others. This is certainly not incorrect. Yet if we consider it only in such emotional terms, we will have understood only half its significance. One Japanese dictionary defines compassion as: (1) the mercy and love held by buddhas and bodhisattvas for living beings (one theory holds that giving happiness to living beings is benevolence and removing suffering from them is compassion) and (2) affection, pity, and mercy. It is noteworthy that other Japanese dictionaries also give the Buddhist meaning of the word as the first definition. Thus, *compassion* should be understood as a word deriving originally from ideas unique to Buddhism, with meanings deeper than ordinary love or affection.

The Chinese compound for *compassion* is composed of two characters. The first translates the Sanskrit *maitri*, a word derived from *mitra*, “friend.” Thus *maitri* can also be interpreted as “supreme friendship,” with the more profound connotation of “having feelings of friendship toward all, not a particular person.” The Chinese translators therefore chose to translate it with the character *tz’u*, meaning “universal benevolence and love.” The Buddha taught that such benevolence is born of an impartial mind. This refers to feeling that if we feel delight or happiness we want others to experience the same delight, and if we feel joy at hearing a fine teaching we want to share that joy with others. Thus, *maitri* can be defined as “benevolence giving pleasure and happiness.”

The second character translates the Sanskrit *karuna*, meaning the sympathy we feel when we hear the voices of those suffering from various problems in life. At such a time we can make good use of our own experience of suffering. Unless we ourselves have at one time cried out in distress and groaned in suffering, we cannot understand deeply the pain of others. Only those who have themselves grieved deeply over their own suffering can sympathize deeply with the grief of others. *Karuna* is deep understanding of and sympathy with the suffering of others, feeling it as if it were our own. The Chinese translators expressed this aspect of compassion with the character *pei*, meaning “to grieve.” It was an inspired translation. People who have been able to liberate themselves from the bonds of suffering a little earlier than their fellows cannot help feeling, when they see the pain of others, that they must do all they can to release them from it. Thus *karuna* can be defined as “compassion removing pain and suffering.”

“Benevolence and compassion,” therefore, is the state of mind in which a person who is happy wishes to share that happiness with others, and a person who has already

escaped from suffering feels the suffering of others as his or her own and wishes to help them get rid of it. It is the expression of an impartial mind respecting equality. Despite the equality of all human beings, at certain times and under certain circumstances there arises discrimination between happiness and suffering. This inequality resonates in a person’s mind, and a feeling that seeks to equalize what is unequal and return to the original state of equality wells up in the mind. Then the person begins to feel that he or she cannot help trying to do so. This is benevolence and compassion, with which everyone is originally endowed. The degree to which they are exercised, however, depends on whether one’s sense of human equality is thoroughgoing.

This is why Buddhism teaches from the first the great wisdom of human equality. The first half of the Lotus Sutra expounds the great wisdom that can penetrate the real aspect of all dharmas. We must bear this firmly in mind. Unless our benevolence and compassion are rooted in such wisdom, we may be drowned in emotion and deluded by the defilements, in an erroneous form of sympathy. For example, we all tend to sympathize unreservedly with a child who has fallen over and want to help the child up, saying, “Poor thing!” Though this looks like a manifestation of compassion, it is not true compassion. Sometimes a child has to be made aware of his or her own abilities, and we must steel our hearts against pity and refrain from gathering the child into our arms. Instead we sometimes have to cheer up the child, suggesting that one must be strong and get up after falling. This is true benevolence and compassion.

The same applies to friends, subordinates, and others we meet in our daily lives. Sometimes we need to sympathize and gather them in our arms. At other times we have to scold them and push them away. While acting exactly as the circumstances demand, according to the personality, situation, environment, and other conditions of the person concerned, we bring out and develop the person’s true abilities—this is benevolence and compassion based on wisdom. Similarly, Shakyamuni took no notice when in the middle of the discourse of chapter 2, “Tactfulness,” five thousand disciples left the assembly. This was due to his benevolence and compassion firmly rooted in great wisdom. Reflecting thus, Shakyamuni gives us an ever deeper understanding of the true meaning of why we are told that in the later, degenerate ages we must preach the Law to others with a “great compassionate heart.”

(2) Wearing the robe of the Tathagata: This robe is “the gentle and forbearing heart.” Obviously, “gentle” here means a mild, calm, amicable state of mind, which is the model personality of Buddhists. It is a spirit of great harmony with other people, broadly enfolding them, with no needless

criticism or spite. Such a spirit also emerges from an impartial, nondiscriminating mind.

When we discern the inner essence of those to whom we speak, whether they appear evil, uninterested in the teaching, or argumentative, we see that they possess the buddha-nature. Thus, if we are undistracted by surface phenomena and strive to see them as they really are, our mind cannot help becoming gentle; we only have to establish a good connection as Buddhists with others and venerate their buddha-nature. This is the true worth of the “gentle heart” that Buddhism elucidates; it does not mean having a perpetual smile or following the line of least resistance. Since it is difficult to grasp its true meaning quickly and thoroughly, it is certainly all right in the beginning to wear a smile, even if only in form, for the form helps foster the substance. Therefore if you dare to have a gentle heart, it will spontaneously filter into the spirit. At all events, gentleness must be the basic attitude of one who expounds the Dharma. While sometimes circumstances dictate the use of the more forceful method of “subduing” (*abhibhava*), we should understand that the great principle of disseminating the Buddha Dharma is the moderate and gentle method of guidance called “embracing” (*samgraha*).

Forbearance is usually considered in terms of patience or perseverance. It means to withstand negative energy, such as external resistance, persecution, and abuse. It is often thought of as a weak response to adversity, but this is a great mistake, for it demands great courage. Reprisal, in the form of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, is an action that all can perform if they want. It is, in other words, an action that even an ordinary person can perform. This becomes quite apparent when we look at the daily newspaper reports of those who cause incidents of violence. Can we say that an assailant who stabbed someone because he or she was riled by that person, or an arsonist who set fire to something because of bearing someone a grudge over being abused, was strong? Of course not. Conversely, cannot such a person be regarded as one of the weakest in the world?

When Kapilavastu, the city of the Buddha’s birth, was being attacked by enemy forces, Shakyamuni stood and watched patiently those who marched forward ignoring his remonstrance based on the belief in nonviolence and nonconflict. This forbearance was the reaction of a great and very brave person, and it is because of Shakyamuni’s great bravery that Buddhism has survived to this day as a teaching of world peace. Shakyamuni’s great courage derived from the fact that he had correctly discerned how all things change in their causes, conditions, results, and retributions. Soon after Kapilavastu fell, the invading Kosalans too per-

ished, and their capital is now no more than ruined walls in the jungle. The Buddha Dharma, on the other hand, still flourishes throughout Asia and has begun to flower throughout the world. As long as the human race exists it can be expected to continue.

Forbearance is a powerful state of mind, and a valiant one. We must not be deluded by surface power, surface bravery, but honor profound spiritual courage. Forbearance is not something that withstands only such negative energy as external resistance, persecution, and abuse. It includes a spiritual power that does not allow the mind to be swayed by praise, fame, respect, and hospitality, even when given with goodwill. If we are swayed by these things we will become euphoric and grow arrogant. This kind of forbearance is far harder than enduring the negative energy of abuse. We will easily fall prey to admiration and so forth if we are not clearly aware of our own real nature.

If admiration is praise and veneration of the buddha-nature that is our essential nature, it is a natural outcome and can be accepted disinterestedly, but in most cases such regard is given for temporary manifestations of a person. This is unavoidable, since it is the action of ordinary people, and it is certainly not blameworthy, since it springs from goodwill. Most people, though, go into ecstasies over praise, respect, and hospitality given to temporary manifestations of themselves. This is one of the greatest of human weaknesses. Those who preach the Buddha Dharma must make a very careful distinction between the two. This distinction, between the “real self” and the “temporary self,” must be clearly recognized. We must never forget to admonish ourselves not to allow ourselves to become euphoric and grow arrogant when receiving recognition of the “temporary self.” This is the broader teaching that lies beneath the statement that those who preach the Dharma in later, degenerate times must wear the robe of forbearance.

(3) Sitting on the throne of the Tathagata: The throne is said to be the emptiness of all laws. I have often discussed emptiness (*shunyata*). Here I would like to point out that there are two ways of understanding the teaching of emptiness. The first is the view that all things (dharma) are empty, that all beings are not ultimately real, and that all phenomena are merely temporary manifestations that have come into being through the interaction of causes and conditions. This is certainly a correct interpretation, but to take it only that far leaves open the possibility of denying all phenomena, a rather bleak view that can lead to pessimism. This alone has nothing to say about human liberation. The four great shravakas repented of this view in chapter 4, “Faith Discernment” (see the September/October 2001 issue of DHARMA WORLD):

“The World-honored One for a long time has been preaching the Law, and we all the time seated in our places have become weary in our bodies and neglectful, only thinking of emptiness, of the formless, and of nonfunction, but in regard to the bodhisattva laws, their supernatural displays, the purifying of the buddha lands, and the perfecting of all living beings, our hearts have not taken delight.”

The four great shravakas had been listening to the Buddha’s preaching for a long time and had become tired, thinking only about emptiness (in the Hinayana sense). They felt no joy in undertaking the bodhisattva practice. Mahayana Buddhism arose in reaction to the Hinayana Buddhist view of things and criticized the Hinayana shravakas and pratyekabuddhas as being unable to attain buddhahood.

We should, rather, regard the teaching of emptiness in a positive way. All things exist through the interaction of causes and conditions, but to say that there is no substance that is fixed and permanent is not to intimate that nothing exists or that all is “nothingness.” What comes into being through the interaction of causes and conditions most definitely exists, but there is nothing that is fixed and eternally unchanging. If we hope for good phenomena, we ourselves have to create good cause and conditions. Chapter 2 of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, “Preaching,” says:

“All laws were originally, will be, and are in themselves empty in nature and form; they are neither great nor small, neither appearing nor disappearing, neither fixed nor movable, and neither advancing nor retreating; and they are nondualistic, just emptiness. All living beings, however, discriminate falsely: ‘It is this’ or ‘It is that,’ and ‘It is advantageous’ or ‘It is disadvantageous’; they entertain evil thoughts, make various evil karmas, and [thus] transmigrate within the six realms of existence; and they suffer all manner of miseries, and cannot escape from there during infinite kotis of kalpas.” (See the January/February 1993 issue.)

Here we find the view that all things are originally neither fixed nor discriminatory, and are equal within a great harmony. Phenomena are neither good nor evil in themselves, but are only seen to be so by ordinary people. Because they have such false views as “That is good” or “This is bad,” they have evil thoughts and experience suffering. It is a mistake to look at things discriminately and therefore suffer. Originally all things are without discrimination, and equal within a great harmony. In other words, all things are just as they should be.

We human beings are no exception. It is because there was a need for us to be born into this world that we were so born. This should make us keenly aware of the reverence in which life should be held and the gratitude we

should feel toward it for supporting us. At the same time, others too were born because there was a need for them to be born. So we must recognize and venerate the dignity of others, as well. Here we see the birth of what Buddhism calls the mind, or thought, of equality. This is why “emptiness” is often used in the sense of “equality.”

In this sense, emptiness has none of the pessimism that might be ascribed to the first definition; rather, it is very apparent that it honors life. Our joy in being sustained by the great life must flow out. In addition, we gain a strong fellow feeling toward all other people, who are also sustained by the Buddha’s compassion. The Buddha teaches us therefore that when we preach the Dharma we must be mindful of “sitting on the throne of the Tathagata,” on the basis of a thorough realization of emptiness.

To sum up the teaching of the three rules of the abode, the robe, and the throne of the Tathagata, when we preach the Lotus Sutra to others we must do so with great compassion, based on thorough realization of emptiness and with a mind strong enough to be indifferent to both the praise and the censure of the world.

TEXT Medicine King! I [though dwelling] in another realm will send spirit messengers to gather hearers of the Law for that [preacher] and also send spirit bhikshus, bhikshunis, and male and female lay devotees to hear his preaching of the Law. All these spirit people, hearing the Law, shall unresistingly receive it in faith and obey it.

COMMENTARY When a person preaches the Lotus Sutra in later, degenerate times, the Buddha will send from his buddha realm beings who temporarily take the form of human beings so that they may gather together people to listen to the person’s preaching of the Law. Furthermore, he will send ordained and lay people with a temporary human form to listen to that preaching. On first reading this seems somewhat removed from reality, but actually it makes great sense. People who practice the teaching must themselves have such experiences as this. That is, they have only to read obediently the Lotus Sutra, the teaching that sustains the life of all beings and all things, practice it without argument, and preach the Law as it pertains to each person. They have only to do this without inserting their own obstinate “self.”

I do not consider that it is I who preach and disseminate the Dharma; I believe it is the Buddha who is moving me to preach it. Thus I can always speak and write with a calm mind and with confidence. As long as I believe the Buddha is standing firmly behind me, I am secure. Likewise, I am assured that those who listen to my talks and read my writings have been sent to do so by the Buddha, and I am filled

with gratitude to them. While those people may regard me as their teacher, I venerate them as messengers of the Buddha. I have often been told that it must have taken great effort on my part to bring millions of believers into the circle; on the surface it may seem that great effort was involved, but all I did was transmit the teaching of the Buddha according to the working of the truth. Believing that the Buddha has acted to send people to hear the Dharma being preached through one moved by him, and that they in turn gather others to hear the Dharma, I am filled with great calm and an overwhelming sense of gratitude. From my own experience I believe firmly in the truth of what the Buddha has preached here. I hope that you will read the passage with all your attention and with an open mind.

TEXT If the preacher of the Law takes up his abode in a secluded place, then I will abundantly send gods, dragons, spirits, gandharvas, asuras, and others to hear him preach.

COMMENTARY This is another important passage. “A secluded place” refers to a quiet place like the middle of a forest or the depths of a mountain. Since in such a place believers would quietly practice concentration (*samadhi*) and enter into meditation (*dhyana*), the Buddha refers specifically to such an occasion. When a preacher dwells far from human habitation, the Buddha sends nonhuman beings to hear the Dharma. This means that a true preacher must expound the Dharma with the absolute confidence that even in a place where there is no one else, someone is certainly hearing the Dharma. Who is it that listens? Heaven and earth listen; every being in the cosmos listens. As long as every being is sustained by the Buddha (or Thusness, Absolute Truth), the Dharma taught by a true preacher penetrates all things. If the preacher does not have utter compassion and seriousness, speaking to the buddha-nature with which every blade of grass, tree, bird, and animal is endowed, the person cannot be said to be a true person of religion. Those who have such feelings can attain buddhahood, interpenetrating the life of all beings in the universe and becoming one with all heaven and earth. This is the ultimate ideal of the Buddha’s teaching.

TEXT Though I am in a different domain, I will from time to time cause the preacher of the Law to see me. If he forgets any detail of this sutra, I will return and tell him, that he may be in perfect possession of it.”

COMMENTARY Believers who have reached a very high stage of attainment are believed to be able to actually see the body of the Buddha. Apart from such special cases, it is

quite possible that those who believe wholeheartedly in the Buddha’s teaching will from time to time feel vividly that they are one with the Buddha and sustained by the Buddha’s compassion. This is the meaning of seeing the Buddha. “Any detail” means that if the preacher forgets any word or phrase or meaning of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha will recall those details to the person’s mind.

TEXT At that time the World-honored One, desiring to proclaim this meaning over again, spoke thus in verse: “In order to be rid of sloth, / Hearken to this sutra! / Rare is the chance of hearing it / And rare are those who receive it in faith. / It is like a thirsty man needing water, / Who digs in a tableland; / Still seeing dry and arid earth, / He knows water is yet far off. / Moist earth and mire gradually appearing, / He is assured that water is near.

COMMENTARY *In order to be rid of sloth, hearken to this sutra!* It is highly significant that failure to attain enlightenment is attributed to sloth. There are various forms of sloth, such as being too lazy to undertake the practice of the Buddha Way, or growing tired of religious practice when enlightenment is not quickly reached, or being satisfied with having reached personal peace of mind, or losing heart when told of the state of the Buddha’s enlightenment. But if we become aware of the buddha-nature within ourselves and others through the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and manifest it, and know that all beings are capable of attaining buddhahood, any oppressive ideas about religious practice are swept away and our minds are at ease. If, moreover, we realize that by manifesting the buddha-nature within ourselves and others both we and others are saved, we cannot help embarking on a new life, and that is a pleasant path, filled with light and hope. Thus, listening to the Lotus Sutra causes us to recover from any feelings of sloth, and this is a great turning point of human life.

TEXT Know, Medicine King! / Such is the case with those / Who hear not the Law Flower Sutra; / They are far from the Buddha wisdom. / Should they hear this profound sutra, / Which determines the Law for disciples / And is the king of all sutras, / And, hearing, truly ponder it, / Know that those people / Are near the Buddha wisdom.

COMMENTARY *Which determines the Law for disciples.* The Chinese word translated as “determine” is *chüeh-liao*. *Chüeh* means “rip, break, burst,” said specifically of a dike, while *liao* signifies “finish, complete, conclude.” “The Law for disciples” is the teaching of the small vehicle. Thus the phrase “determines the Law for disciples” connotes that this

profound sutra is that which opens the gate of the teachings of the small vehicle and completely reveals the hidden truth lying within them. At first the Buddha expounded many teachings, including the early sutras called the Agamas, to help people reach peace of mind by doing away with the various delusions that are the cause of human suffering. All these can be said to have been like good medicine, saving people from their suffering according to each person's circumstances, capacity, and occasion. The Lotus Sutra, however, is not a specific medicine for a specific disease or a particular course of treatment for particular symptoms, but the teaching that is the fundamental cure for all illnesses, returning all people to perfect health. Its intention is to cause us to attain the state of a perfected human being, that is, buddhahood, by letting us manifest the buddha-nature within us.

The Lotus Sutra is the Buddha's final teaching, containing profundities never before revealed. It would be incorrect, however, to think that these secrets are not contained in the teachings given before the Lotus Sutra, for the basis of all the Buddha's teaching is the truth. It is in the Lotus Sutra, though, that for the first time the very root of that truth, lying deeply buried, is unearthed and brought into the light. In other words, until now the Buddha has pointed out only the trunk, branches, and leaves, but now he reveals clearly that all grow from this particular root. The Buddha therefore states that the Lotus Sutra is the teaching that reveals ("determines") the depths of all other teachings and is "the king of all sutras."

Some people may take this to mean that they can speak slightly of all other sutras without examining them closely, but that would be a grave mistake. The root, the trunk, the branches, and the leaves are all connected and thus are one: The root cannot be separated from the rest. To praise and look to the root alone and to ignore the trunk, branches, and leaves is a biased view that does not consider the life of the tree as a whole.

• *And, hearing, truly ponder it.* The word *hearing* means not only knowing that the Lotus Sutra is "the king of all sutras" but also learning the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. "Truly ponder it" tells us that what is important is not just hearing the teaching but thinking deeply about it. As I mentioned toward the end of my discussion of the previous chapter, unless we meditate on the teaching in the silence of our heart, we will never make it ours.

TEXT Should anyone preach this sutra, / Let him enter the Tathagata abode, / Wear the Tathagata robe, / And sit on the Tathagata throne; / Undaunted amidst the multitude, / Let him openly expound and preach it. / With great

compassion for his abode, / Gentleness and forbearance for his robe, / And the emptiness of all laws for his throne, / Abiding in these, let him preach the Law.

COMMENTARY *Let him openly expound and preach it.* We should not preach the Law in a perfunctory manner. We must preach it by analyzing its profound meaning carefully and grasping it for ourselves, and explain it by varying the way of preaching so that everyone can comprehend it. Thus, the way something is taught will depend upon the person to whom it is being taught.

TEXT If, when he preaches this sutra, / Some should with evil mouth abuse, / Or lay on swords, sticks, shards, or stones, / Think of the Buddha; let him be patient.

COMMENTARY *Think of the Buddha; let him be patient.* These are valuable words. The expression "think of the Buddha" has two meanings. The first is to recall the essence of one's activity, saying, "I am now doing the Buddha's work in his stead." The second is to be convinced of being one with the Buddha, saying, "Since I am doing the Buddha's work, I am always under his protection."

When we are faced with obstructions or persecution in our work, we fight to preserve our rights and, meeting derision, become angry. If we think, though, that we are doing the Buddha's work, there is no longer any need to confront our opponents. Since the Buddha sustains the life of all that exists, our opponents too are naturally sustained by his compassion. They are unable to realize it yet, and obstruct the Buddha's radiance only because of the fog of their own delusion. So we may cause a thought of compassion to blow away that fog of delusion, but we will not give way to the mind of asuras and the inhabitants of hells, who want to fight or get angry. This is the sublime culmination of forbearance. To put up patiently with our own anger is the first step to the practice of forbearance. The highest state of forbearance is to enfold our opponent gently in the knowledge that we are acting on behalf of the Buddha and have the same tolerance that he does. This is the level of forbearance needed by one who preaches the Dharma.

If we have the great assurance of knowing that we are under the Buddha's protection, we will not be thrown into turmoil by phenomena that threaten us. The protection of the Buddha means that we are guarded by the true Dharma. Delusion is no match for the true Dharma. Is there anyone on earth who can refuse to have anything to do with the sun's radiance? Even in the case of people who locked themselves away in a room, the food they ate would have been nurtured by the sun's rays, as would have been the

cotton or wool of their clothing. In the same way, however thick may be the fog of delusion that surrounds people, and however much they may seek to refuse the true Dharma, it is impossible to resist. The rays of the sun of the true Dharma pierce the fog of delusion and dispel it. This is why we can say that delusion is no match for the true Dharma. Thus, one who acts in accordance with the Buddha's teaching is fostered by the true Dharma, and one who expounds the Buddha's teaching is protected by the true Dharma. Because the Buddha is the Tathagata, that is, "the one who has come from Thusness," he will unfailingly protect all those who preach the true Dharma, which is Thusness itself.

However assailed we are by adversity, we have nothing to be afraid of, for such adversity is a temporary phenomenon that arises only because we are not yet completely one with the Buddha. It is important that we deepen our religious practice, for there is no need to fear such a phenomenon, to get angry at it, or to be swayed by it. As people of religion, it is of prime importance that we have the conviction that we are with the Buddha at all times and on all occasions. With that confidence, we need fear nothing in this life.

TEXT In thousands of myriads of kotis of lands, / I appear with pure imperishable bodies, / And in infinite kotis of kalpas / Preach the Law for all the living. / If anyone after my extinction / Is able to proclaim this sutra, / I will send him the four spirit groups / Of bhikshus and bhikshunis, / Pure[-minded] men and women, / To worship him as teacher of the Law, / While I will draw living beings / And assemble them to hear [this] Law.

COMMENTARY *In thousands of myriads of kotis of lands, I appear with pure imperishable bodies, and in infinite kotis of kalpas preach the Law for all the living.* This passage gives a hint of what is revealed in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra—the Eternal Original Buddha, enlightened in the remotest past. Originally the Buddha's substance transcends all phenomena and has nothing to do with birth or death, for he is the Law-body (the Dharma itself), immortal ("imperishable") and pure. This is the meaning of "pure imperishable bodies." The substance of the Original Buddha permeates the universe, existing from the remotest past into the infinite future, and therefore he can manifest himself in phenomenal form at any time and in any place. That is, he reveals the true Dharma "in thousands of myriads of kotis of lands" and "in infinite kotis of kalpas."

Shakyamuni, preaching the Lotus Sutra on Vulture Peak in India, is a manifestation of that Law-body. Even though that manifestation has disappeared ("after my extinction"),

since the Original Buddha's substance is eternal and immortal, he will, when the need arises, manifest himself somewhere, sometime, in some form, or send his messengers (or divided bodies) in his stead. Therefore, if there is anyone who preaches the Lotus Sutra, he sends monks, nuns, and lay believers as manifestations of himself and has them make offerings to that teacher of the Law. Furthermore, he assembles living beings and guides them to listen to the teaching.

• *Pure[-minded] men and women.* This refers to *upasakas* (laymen) and *upasikas* (laywomen). The "four spirit groups," of course, refers to bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas (ordained men and women and laymen and laywomen).

TEXT Should men seek to assail with ill [words], / With swords, sticks, shards, or stones, / I will send spirit people / To act as his protectors.

COMMENTARY *Spirit people.* In the Lotus Sutra, this means beings manifested through the Buddha's supernatural power to save living beings.

TEXT Should any preacher of [this] Law, / Dwelling alone in a secluded place, / In solitude where is no voice of man, / Read and recite this sutra, / Then I will appear to him / With a pure and luminous body. / Should he forget sentences or words, / I will tell him to his clear apprehension.

COMMENTARY *Solitude.* Here this means a state of extreme quiet with absolutely no disturbance.

TEXT Whenever such a man, perfect in these merits, / Either preaches to the four groups / Or in seclusion reads and recites the sutra, / He will always see me.

COMMENTARY The reference to "these merits" is a little unclear, but the Sanskrit text clearly states that they are the merits acquired by one who practices the Lotus Sutra; they may also mean favors or benefits.

TEXT When such a man is in seclusion, / I will send gods and dragon kings, / Yaksas, demons, spirits, and others / To be hearers of [this] Law. / That man will delight to preach the Law / And expound it without hindrance. / Because buddhas guard and mind him, / He can cause multitudes to rejoice.

COMMENTARY *Delight to preach the Law.* This means to preach the Dharma joyfully and willingly.

• *Hindrance.* This refers to the obstructions and delays that

cause doubts about the doctrine and difficulties in understanding it.

TEXT Whoever is close to [such] a teacher of the Law / Will speedily attain the bodhisattva way; / And he who becomes a pupil of that teacher / Will behold buddhas [numerous] as the sands of the Ganges.”

COMMENTARY What kind of person is “[such] a teacher of the Law”? Such a person willingly preaches the Dharma, expounding it without hesitation and in an intelligible way according to the capacity of the hearer. Even when alone in the forest or other secluded place, such a person preaches it to all that exists in the universe. That person is a serious teacher of the Law with a firm understanding of the Dharma. Those who hear the Dharma from such a teacher cannot help arousing the aspiration to attain human perfection (buddhahood). Because of that aspiration, they will strive to enhance the capacity of both themselves and others. This is the meaning of “attain the bodhisattva way.”

Since those who study the Buddha’s teaching under the guidance of such a teacher of the Law are able to firmly grasp the teaching, which is Thusness, or Absolute Truth, they are able to meet numerous beings who have been sent by Thusness (tathagatas, or buddhas), and to truly feel that they are always with the Buddha. This is the meaning of “will behold buddhas [numerous] as the sands of the Ganges.”

Here ends chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra, “A Teacher of the Law.” Because this chapter explains to us as believers of later times the attitudes we must bear in mind when we preach the Dharma and points out the merits those who preach it correctly can gain, we must understand this chapter as a teaching closely and directly related to our religious life.

To be continued

In this series, passages in the TEXT sections are quoted from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1975, with slight revisions. The diacritical marks originally used for several Sanskrit terms in the TEXT sections are omitted here for easier reading.

An ink painting by Founder Niwano, titled Meikyo, or “clear mirror.”

The Lotus Sutra's World View Regarding Peace

by Nikkyo Niwano

This essay is part of a continuing series of translations from a volume of inspirational writings by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. DHARMA WORLD will continue to publish these essays because of their lasting value as guidance for the daily practice of one's faith.

Both the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings and the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law (the Lotus Sutra) open with a description of those who had gathered to hear the Buddha's discourse. They included large numbers of bodhisattvas, ordained followers (*bhikshus* and *bhikshunis*) and lay followers (*upasakas* and *upasikas*), as well as those who were not believers: high-ranking figures such as kings, princes, government ministers, along with ordinary people, both men and women. In front of the Buddha they all sat on the same ground with equal status. There were also other beings present besides human beings—deities who dwell in the heavenly (spiritual) realm, spirits moving in the sky, dragon lords from deep within the seas, together with all the various inhabitants of the animal realm. In other words, all the various forces of life in the universe came together united to hear the Buddha teach.

This symbolizes the world view of the Lotus Sutra, which can be described succinctly as follows. Everything that exists in the world can be attributed to the same single, unseen substance, the great life-force of the universe. This life-force manifests itself in various forms represented by everything in the universe, but ultimately all these manifestations are one substance. This means that, although phenomenal appearances are multifaceted and infinitely varied, in essence they are undifferentiated.

Buddhist philosophy teaches this world view in such terms as “the real aspect of all things” and “the ten such-

nesses.” This is what the Lotus Sutra, in chapter 2, “Tactfulness,” explains this way: “Only a buddha together with a buddha can fathom the Reality of All Existence, that is to say, all existence has such a form, such a nature, such an embodiment, such a potency, such a function, such a primary cause, such a secondary cause, such an effect, such a recompense, and such a complete fundamental whole.”

The “real aspect of all things” implies that, although all phenomenal things have an inherent form, inherent characteristics, inherent substance, and inherent potential, the energy of which gives rise to specific workings and whose causes and conditions give differing results and residual influences, all such changes are based on a single universal principle. In other words, although all phenomena may appear to be very different from each other, in terms of their “true entity” they are equally the same as “empty” from beginning to end.

“Empty” refers to the underlying, single reality that gives rise to all phenomena in the universe. In scientific terms, this could be described as the fundamental energy that produces all things, and in religious terms, the great life-force (the Eternal Original Buddha) permeating all of existence. When we talk in these terms, though, the scale is so vast that we may have difficulty in understanding how this is connected with our own lives. All the same, it is of vital importance that we do think about it for ourselves, whether in terms of philosophy or religion, for it has a close bearing on the question of human improvement. That is why I would like to offer a few ideas that may be of help in explaining this concept to those who are not familiar with it.

First, at root, everything that exists is one. If we follow this way of thinking, the six billion or so people who live

Nikkyo Niwano, the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was an honorary president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace and was honorary chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) at the time of his death in October 1999.

on the earth, although they may appear to be completely different from one another, share on a fundamental level the same existence. If we realize this fact in the depths of our hearts, we cannot but be overcome by feelings of compassionate love for all, for are not human beings all siblings? We will want to extend our hands to all, to join with them in our common march through life, and this experience will fill our hearts with inexpressible warmth and light.

Putting this inclusively, each existence and its workings arise through certain causes and conditions. In other words, they come into being through dependent origination or causality. It is no exaggeration to say that this understanding was at the root of the Buddha's great enlightenment, and all his subsequent teachings grew out of it.

When we understand the principles of emptiness and causation, we immediately realize that nothing remains in a static state; rather, everything is in a state of fluidity and change that we can influence. It is a basic law that given particular causes and conditions, particular results and

influences can be obtained. Therefore, no matter how bad contemporary society risks becoming, we should not despair or become resigned to it. Instead we must determine to change bad into good; together we can bring about those causes and conditions which ensure that good will arise.

When we understand what good is and what is for the benefit of all people, we can move positively in the direction to achieve it. What is necessary is to continue to strive in that direction. Doing this will ensure that good can arise from any situation. Of course, the question remains about what kind of thing the "good" we are speaking of actually is, and about what we imply when we talk about something being for the benefit of all. The answer will become clear when we look at the question from the viewpoint of the principle that all things are devoid of self. In other words, from the standpoint of emptiness and causation, all things exist only through mutual relationships. Nothing can be completely independent of everything else. To be in ultimate harmony with everything that exists is "good" and what is good must then benefit all beings in the universe. □

The frontispiece to a Lotus Sutra scroll, in which bodhisattvas, clerics and lay followers, heavenly deities, and others are depicted as hearing the Buddha's discourse.

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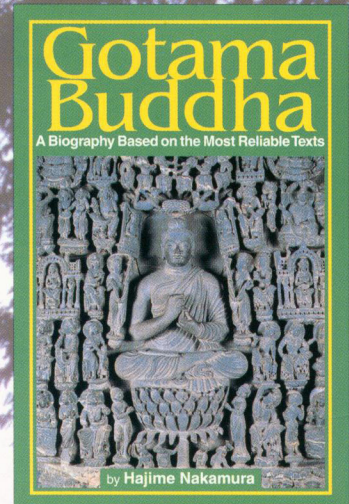
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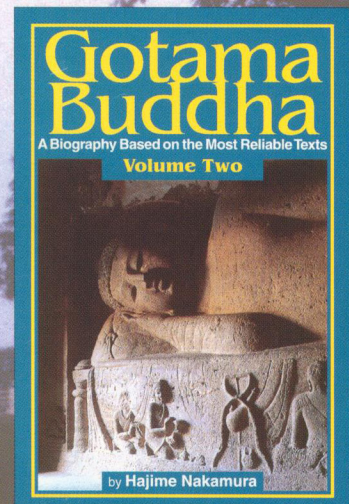
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